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saved from oblivion

Hikaru Nakamura

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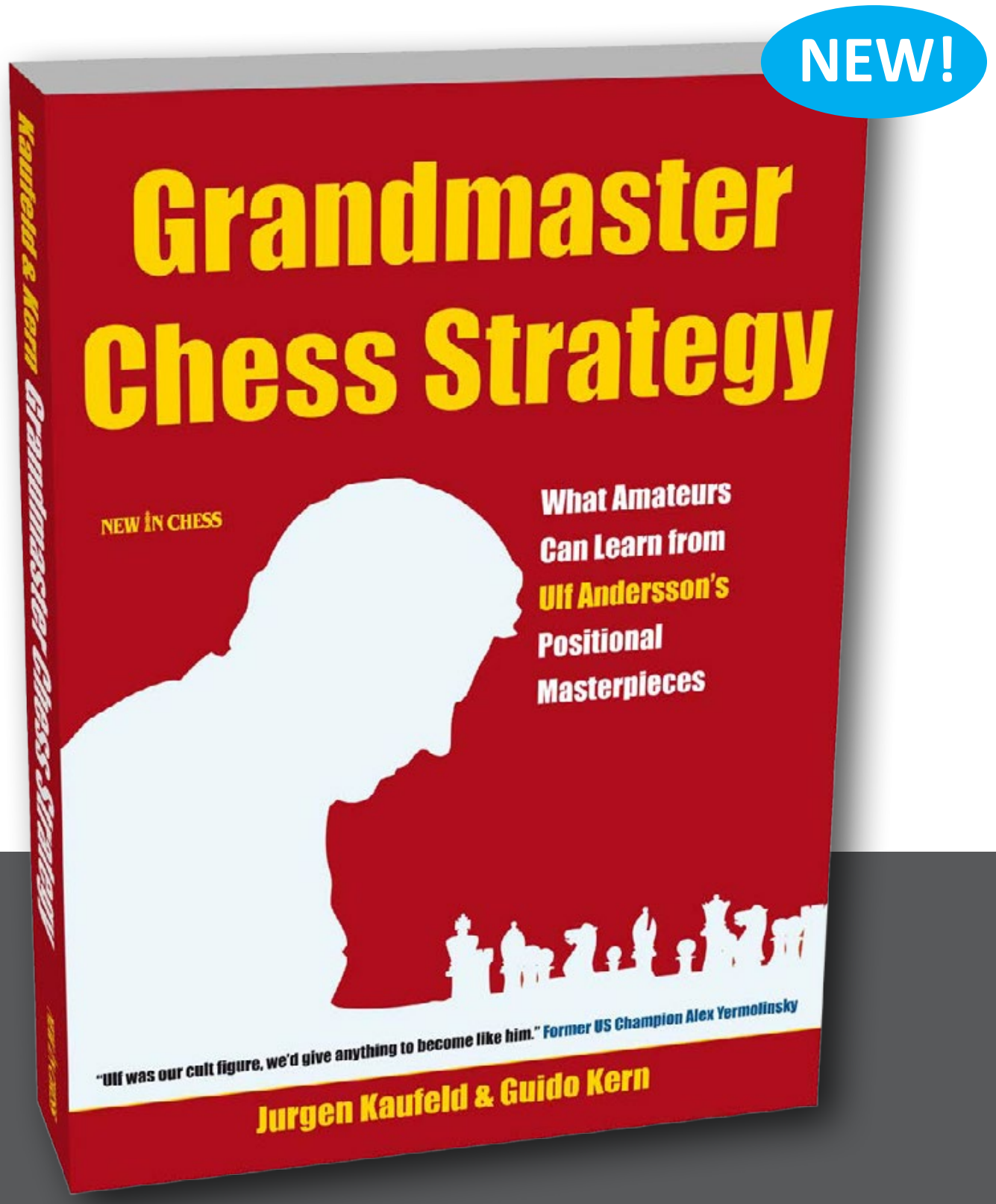
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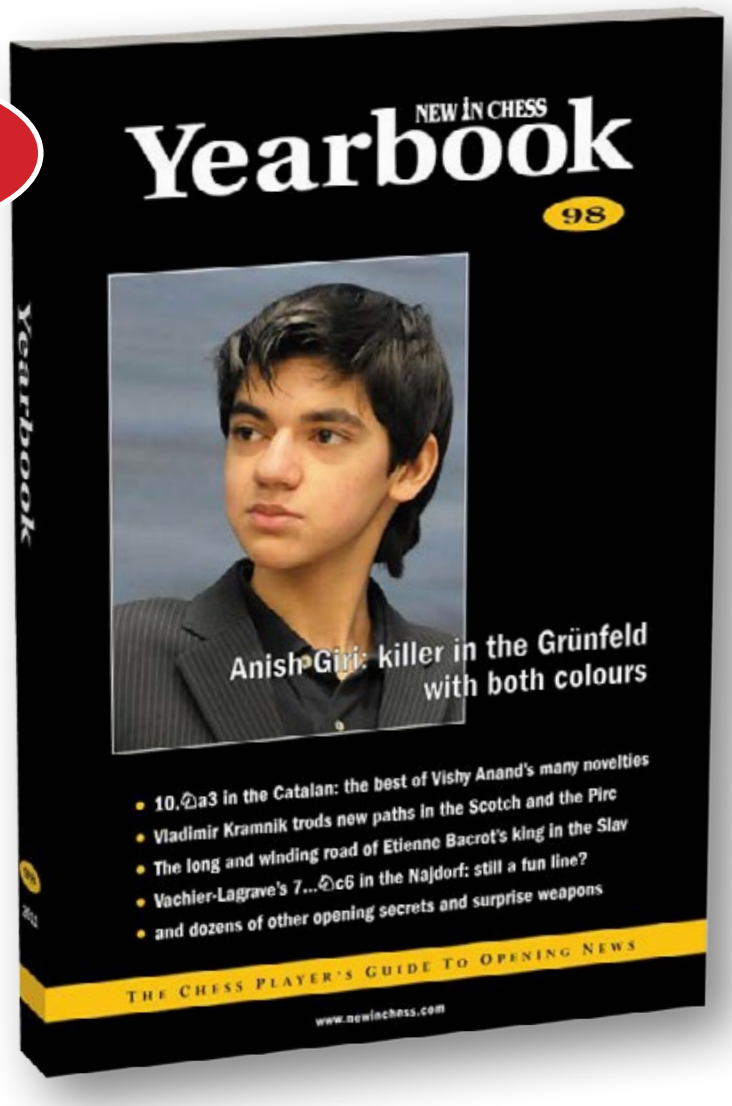
NEW


NEW IN CHESS
Yearbook
98
Yearbook
Anish Giri: killer in the Grünfeld with both colours
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• Vladimir Kramnik trods new paths in the Scotch and the Pirc
• The long and winding road of Etienne Bacrot's king in the Slav
• Vachier-Lagrave's 7...♘c6 in the Najdorf: still a fun line?
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98

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- Just how risky is Vladimir Kramnik’s 4...a6 in the Pirc?
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- Is Maxime Vachier-Lagrave’s 7...♘c6 in the Najdorf still fun for Black?
- What are Viktor Moskalenko’s occultest ideas in the French?
- Why don’t they play the North Sea Defence in Wijk aan Zee?
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The Chess Player’s Guide to Opening News

2011 Issue 2

NEW IN CHESS

PUBLISHER: Allard Hoogland EDITORS-IN-CHIEF: Dirk Jan ten Geuzendam, Jan Timman

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A splendid side-show

'More than just for myself this is a great day for American chess.'

Tata Steel Tournament

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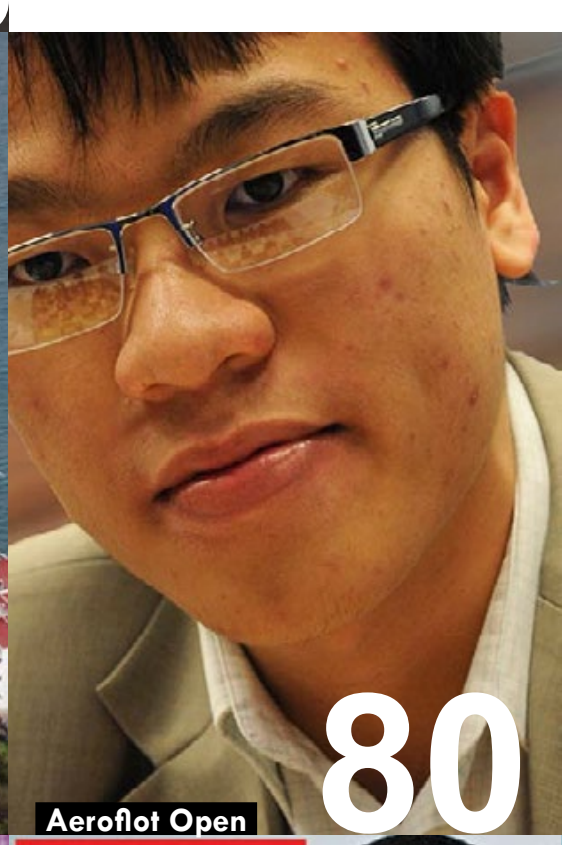

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COVER PHOTO
Hikaru Nakamura: New In Chess

NIC's Café

Master of the Board

As you all know, the most anticipated release in the hip-hop scene is Dr. Dre's new album 'Detox'. Rumour has it that it will come out this April, but maybe you shouldn't get too excited yet. After all, the 'Doc' first announced 'his new album' Detox as long ago as 2002, when he said he expected it to appear in 2004 as the successor of his album '2001' (released in 1999, even then he wasn't very good at years) that sold 6 million copies. In the decade that followed Detox took on mythical proportions, but also remained carefully hidden in Dr. Dre's studio, where he was mainly working as a producer for other artists such as Eminem and 50 Cent. But now the moment seems to be near. Two tracks from the album have already been released as singles and to take away any last doubts, Dr. Dre appeared on the cover of the January issue of XXL sitting at a chess board! And, as we all know, once you mention or show 'chess', intelligence, strategic planning, reliability and what not are never far away.

Is Dr. Dre a chess player? To be honest, we don't know for sure. He's used the game in a metaphorical sense in his lyrics, but the best proof seems to

Dr. Dre, Master of the Board, expertly swings his knight to c6.

be the routine way in which he holds the knight in his fingers and swings it from b8 to c6 (a pity we can't hear the beat with which he thumped it down on that square). For the moment we leave it to our friends of the Hip-Hop Chess Association. Why don't they celebrate the release of Detox, when it finally occurs, with one of their unique events where chess, music and martial arts meet? Special guest? Dr. Dre, master of the board!

Gliga's New Career

Music and chess have been happy companions all through the ages. Philidor, Prokoviev, Oistrakh, Smyslov, Taimanov, you name them, the list of celebrities with a passion and talent for both is long and impressive. Twenty-two years ago (New In Chess 1989/3) we had an interview with Svetozar Gli-

Better late than never. At the age of 88 composer Svetozar Gligoric saw his first CD released.

goric, who already at that time was called 'the Legend' in his country. In the interview, Gligoric spoke about his experiences as an arbiter during the first Karpov-Kasparov match, which dragged on endlessly when the players started to draw one game after the other. Gligoric ended up staying in Moscow six weeks longer than his contract stipulated. During these long months, he told us, he found great comfort in the piano that he had asked the organizers to provide him with in his apartment. He had started studying the piano when he was 60, and although he said that he was not a great player he was 'improving all the time'.

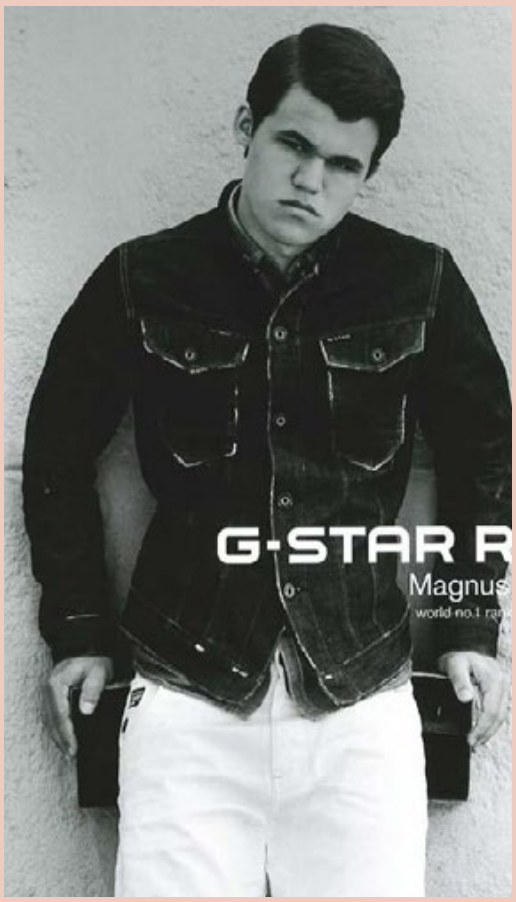
In the years that followed Gligoric kept improving and also started to compose. Now, at the age of 88, 'Gliga' is the second-oldest living chess grandmaster (behind Yury Averbakh, who turned 89 on February 8), and easily the oldest musical debutant in the chess world. In his hometown of Belgrade the former war hero proudly attended the presentation of his first CD. The album is called 'How I survived the 20th century' and is filled with compositions by the grand old man in a surprising range of music, from jazz and blues to (are you listening, Dr. Dre?) rap!

U Got the Look

Chess has always been a popular prop in advertising, because of its connotations with intellect and deep thoughts that the average mortal can only marvel at. But let's face it, the really intriguing thinkers of today's world are the fashion models. Just look at them parading on the catwalk in the finest creations with those utterly bored looks saying, 'When can I please go home to work on my new symphony?' or 'Why are you keeping me from finishing the final chapter of my book?' Or open up any fashion magazine and see models in the finest clothes with empty stares as if the doctor has just given them some really bad news. What are they thinking about? No one knows. Some look pained, as if the designer has left a dozen of pins on the inside of their jackets while making some last-minute adjustments. Others glare at you as if it's your fault that they're wearing those latest pants of a top-end label.

So maybe it was only natural that G-Star Raw came up with the idea to turn chess star Magnus Carlsen into a model. After all, deep thought multiplied by deeply vexed thought must inevitably lead to the apex of fashion photography. In the first series of promotional photos by star photographer Anton Corbijn (for samples, see New In Chess 2010/5) the Norwegian grandmaster indeed demon-

strated that he, too, can look dark and gloomy, the darkest photo being the one where he stares at the onlooker with the angry and aggrieved look of



Magnus Carlsen meets Anton Corbijn, Part II. 'Why is this taking so long? Has he never taken a photograph before?'

a pupil who has been taken to task for repeatedly talking in class.

In the meantime, Carlsen and Corbijn have met again for a new promotional campaign, this time on a rooftop in downtown Miami. The result is slightly more breezy and optimistic than last time, but these photos, too, add to the mystery of why fashion models want us to believe that what they are doing is absolutely no fun. In one photo Carlsen is looking at us as if it's all our fault, in another he emptily stares into the far distance with a look that seems to suggest that he can't wait to go home and work on his openings.

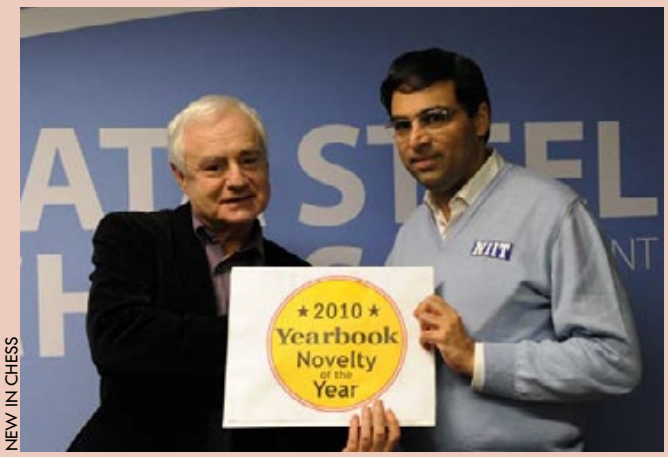
Top of the World

An innocent passer-by seeing the new G-Star Raw campaign may think that Carlsen looks so unhappy because, contrary to what the posters claim, he is currently not the world's top-ranked chess player anymore, although the difference with the new number one is almost negligible. On the list that FIDE published on March 1, the new Top 10 is: 1. Anand (India), 2817; 2. Carlsen (Norway), 2815; 3. Aronian (Armenia), 2808; 4. Kramnik (Russia), 2785; 5. Ivanchuk (Ukraine), 2779; 6. Karjakin (Russia), 2776; 7. Topalov (Bulgaria), 2775; 8. Nakamura (United States), 2774; 9. Mamedyarov (Azerbaijan), 2772; 10. Grischuk (Russia), 2747.

Congrats to World Champion Vishy Anand for being back at the top, to Hikaru Nakamura for being well on his way to his new dream (2800) and to Vasily Ivanchuk for amazing us all the time.

Novelty of the Year

Vishy Anand not only reclaimed the top position in the world rankings, he also won the 2010 Yearbook Novelty of the Year! In Wijk aan Zee, New In Chess Yearbook editor Genna Sosonko handed the World Champion his prize, which consisted of 350 euro and the deep admiration and appreciation of all our Yearbook readers. In an online poll, the readers judged that Anand's 10.♘a3! in the fourth game of the world championship match against Veselin Topalov was the novelty with the greatest impact in 2010. This win was analysed in Yearbook 95 by Anish Giri. Anand's novelty finished well ahead of runner-up 12.♘cb5!, Dmitry Yakovenko's 'torpedo move' against Ernesto Inarkiev in the Exchange Ruy Lopez.



NEW IN CHESS

Yearbook editor Genna Sosonko hands Vishy Anand his prize.

Let's tattoo that too!

Sometimes you play a move that feels so good you believe it should be immortalized. What are the options? You can frame the score-sheet and hang it in a prominent place, email it to everyone you know or add it to your Facebook page. Or? Tavon Carter, a 1800-player from Baltimore, Maryland, had quite a different idea. As he already had seven tattoos, he believed that a further tattoo of 'one of the best piece sacs' he ever made was the solution. Tavon is an avid player and will certainly play many more memorable games. We just wonder what he will look like in 10 years' time. And we're not talking about his hairdo. ■

BETSY DYNAKO

Tavon Carter is looking for inspiration for further tattoos.

BETSY DYNAKO

This one he's already gotten behind him.

Your Move

Garish and ostentatious

A unique, graphically well designed, easy in the hand, and intelligently composed New In Chess magazine format 'of old', has been trashed and replaced by a garish and ostentatious publication, bursting with graphic kitsch.

Full-page photos of male chess players are overwritten by gigantic letters, clumsy juxtaposition of images, coloured twirlings and roundings; razzle-dazzle perhaps but the end product of New In Chess 2011/1 is nothing but mediocre and no better than most mass-circulation journals.

Perhaps there is reason and intention behind the bigger format change, to the effect of let it glow and shine and it's bound to sell better.

Alternatively, one does notice in the colophon (page 7) that New In Chess has appointed a new art director. Could all this be simply a case of an over-ambitious newcomer determined to profile his artistic ego? If so, he should remember the words of Mies van der Rohe, that sometimes 'less is more'!

Boris Kazanski,
Architect and Urban Designer,
Berlin/Sydney

Utter disappointment

I am sure you have your reasons, but I wanted to express my utter disappointment upon hearing the announcement that you are changing the size of the New In Chess magazine. Selfishly, as a collector who not only reads but also keeps the magazine, consistency in format is extremely nice. Informant hasn't changed the size of their books in 40 years. Chess Digest, which put out the same type of product, changed the size every issue and readers and collectors lost interest because of that oddity. The current format of the magazine, which was book-like in its binding rather than a stapled magazine format was a very nice improvement over the earlier format – but it was the same or almost identical size. The size as it was is ideal, as it is both easy to read in one or two hands and it is portable – not to mention that in this format (size and binding) it keeps its shape like a book. I know I am being picky and probably some would say compulsive (my wife included), but why change a perfect format?

Kenneth Calitri
Reston, Virginia, USA

Another step forward

Congratulations on another step forward. The new layout and format is really impressive. The distance to the world's second best chess magazine has increased a lot. I appreciate that you not only concentrate on good texts, but also on high-class pictures.

Calle Erlandsson
Lund, Sweden

A great positive change

'What is this?' I wondered when a glamorous-looking magazine dropped on my doormat the other day. I must admit that I was a bit shocked when I realized it was New In Chess in a changed format, as I had gotten so used to its old look over the years. Still, once I started browsing through it, I soon realized that it is in fact much easier to read, with a slightly larger font, considerably larger diagrams and much larger pictures. It is more spacious, less compact and therefore suits my old eyes better. A great positive change indeed.
So many thanks and congratulations to the publisher and the editors-in-chief for their creative vision.

Einar S. Einarsson
Reykjavik, Iceland

Mother-in-law

And how do you expect me to hide New In Chess now from the eyes of my mother-in-law?

Peter Zunkler
Cologne, Germany

The lottery of life

I always read the contributions to your magazine by Hans Ree with enjoyment, and his article on Yasser Seirawan (New In Chess 2010/8) was a case in point, showing how the Dutch see their British neighbours.

As a British gentleman (both above and below the waist) I can assure him that our virility is as great as ever. At the end of the nineteenth century the great imperialist Cecil Rhodes was introduced to a young assistant sent out from England to Africa. 'Young man,' he said, 'you have been born an English gentleman, and have therefore won first prize in the lottery of life.' How very true, and how sad that today there are so few of us. Noblesse oblige.

John Collins
Nottingham, England

Cover girls

I've searched your website looking for a New In Chess cover showing a female chess player – to no avail. You must be the only chess magazine in the world never to have put a woman on their cover. Still, I feel that female chess definitely deserves this kind of tribute by the best and most widespread chess magazine in the world. I thought the golden opportunity for doing so arose when Hou Yifan became the youngest World Champion in history. Only to be disappointed: not Hou Yifan on the cover of 2011/1 issue, instead just one of the few top players. Once again.

Giorgio Chinnici
Milan, Italy

Readers can send their opinions to:
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Letters may be edited or abridged

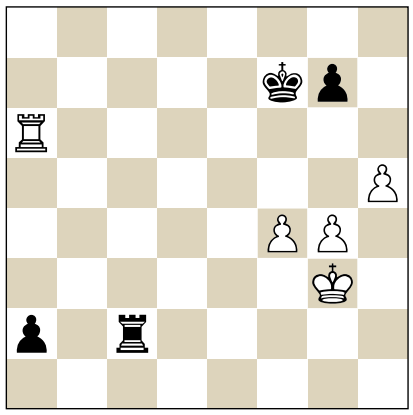
Postscript DJtG:

You are right that it's been a while since a lady graced the cover of our magazine and you will probably argue that the last time (New In Chess 2006/6) didn't really count as Sergey Karjakin's mother on horseback would probably not have made it to the cover if her son had not been in the picture too. Still, several female chess players have appeared on our cover. Without checking our website the following names come to mind: Sofia Polgar, Zsuzsa Polgar, Judit Polgar (more than once), Xie Jun, Xu Yuhua and Antoaneta Stefanova. Not many, that's true and we will keep your words in mind!

More endgame analysis

I would like to thank Jan Timman for his column on the endgames from the 2010 Tal Memorial in New In Chess 2010/8. Too often in modern chess, the focus is on the latest opening novelties, while the endgame is neglected. I would like to make a couple of suggestions in relation to Mr Timman's notes:

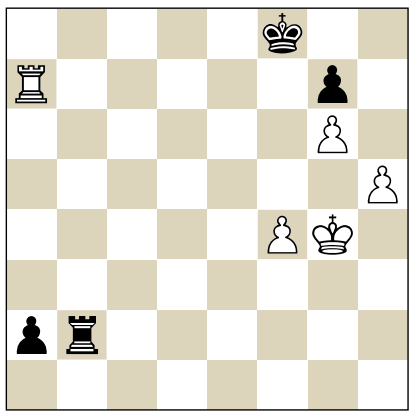
In the comments to White's 55th Timman gives the following line:



Wang Hao-Gelfand
position after 54...♔f7

55.♔h4 ♖b2 56.♔g5 ♖g2 57.♖a7+ ♔g8 58.♖a8+ ♔f7 59.f5 ♔e7 60.♖a7+ ♔e8 61.h6 gxh6+ 62.♔f6 ♖b2 63.♔g6 ♖g2 64.♖a8+ ♔d7 65.♔f7 ♔d6 66.f6 ♔d5 67.g5 hxg5 68.♔g7 ♔c4 69.f7 ♖f2 70.♖xa2. However, Black can hold with 68...g4 e.g. 69.f7 ♖f2 70.♖xa2 ♖xf7+ 71.♔xf7 ♔e4. However, if White plays 67.♔f8! instead of 67.g5 it is a pretty simple win.

In the actual game after Gelfand's 68th move the following position was reached:



position after 68....♔f8

Here Wang Hao played 69.♔f5, which passes without comment. A better chance is 69.f5, threatening f6, which seems to be winning. After 69...♖f2 (69...♖g2+ 70.♔f3!, and Black can't stop f6) White plays 70.♔g5! ♖g2+ 71.♔f4 ♖f2+ 72.♔e4, and Black can't prevent f6 and retain the a2 pawn.

Please let us see more endgame analysis in the future!

John-Paul Fenwick
Melbourne, Australia

Postscript Jan Timman

Thank you for your analysis. My criticism of Wang Hao's 55.g5 was wrong, since the idea with g5-g6 and f4-f5 seems to work in all cases. This means that White threw away the win at move 70.

Study composers deserve better

In his review of *Dynamic Chess Strategy* (New In Chess 2010/8) Jonathan Rowson shows a study without mentioning the name of its composer, Karl Behting. Such things happen all too often. It is a shame. Study composers deserve more recognition for their work.

Marcel Van Herck
Antwerp, Belgium

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Class of 2011

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A happy end. Hikaru Nakamura, thrilled by his first Grand Slam win, and Anish Giri, pleased with an outstanding debut, were all smiles at the final press-conference.

Wijk aan Zee

With three 2800+ GMs in the pack, plus a former champ familiar with such heights, the number of favourites at the Tata Steel Chess Tournament looked well-defined. If Carlsen or Anand didn't win, then surely Aronian or Kramnik would. Normally speaking, that is. As we all know, statistics say a lot about the past, while they can only guess at the future. In his best performance ever, Hikaru Nakamura defied all predictions. Continuing his steady rise to the top, the 23-year-old American saw a long-cherished dream come true as he won his first Grand Slam tournament with inspired and mature chess. The 73rd edition of the Wijk aan Zee festival will also be remembered for the stunning debut of Anish Giri. Showing no fear or nerves, the 16-year-old Dutch hope defeated Carlsen and got World Champion Anand on the ropes.

Dirk Jan ten Geuzendam

For the last round, Hikaru Nakamura appeared at the board in a stylish grey suit with a matching blue tie. You can often see chess players turn up for their last game in suit and tie, these days, possibly out of fear that their game may be a long one and leave them insufficient time to change before the closing ceremony. That was not the case here. As always in Wijk aan Zee, the final round started at noon, an untimely hour for most grandmasters when choosing the right tie, or, if there is no choice, even only knotting one, is not the first thing they want to have on their minds. The traditional pea soup dinner-cum-prize-giving only starts at 6.30 pm, so there is no need to rush anything. Nakamura's decision to wear a suit for the last game, as the only player in the top group, was obviously prompted by different considerations. The American sensed that history was in the making. If his dream came true, he wanted to be dressed for the occasion and be seen as a worthy representative of his country at the highest chess level.

NEW IN CHESS

Anish Giri and Maxime Vachier-Lagrave have briefly left their tables as Magnus Carlsen and Hikaru Nakamura play their opening moves.

NEW IN CHESS

The bonus. With a firm handshake Juan Carlos Fernandez invites Hikaru Nakamura to the Grand Slam Final in Bilbao.

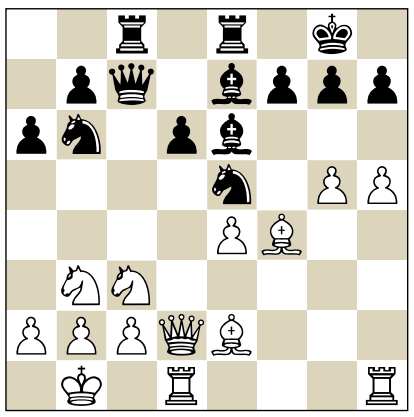
He didn't have to wait for very long before his dream became reality. Defending a half point lead over World Champion Vishy Anand, Nakamura's opening strategy against Wang Hao soon had the desired effect. Putting pressure on the Chinese GM with the black pieces in an aggressive Benoni, he reached a position in which he could comfortably propose a draw on move 22 after he had seen that Anand had no winning chances whatsoever in his black game against Nepomniachtchi.

Nakamura's quick draw robbed the end of the tournament of the suspense that had made last year's last round such a thriller, but who could blame him for that? He rightly didn't mind and neither did his friends on the other side of the ocean who had woken up before dawn to follow their hero at one of the most exciting moments in his career. Elated by the happy end he rushed to his hotel room to chat with them and then returned to De Moriaan for a press conference. In case anyone wondered how pleased he was he started off by saying: 'It was by far my biggest success. [...] More than just for myself this is a great tournament, a great day for American chess. Hopefully I will inspire more kids and people in the U.S. to follow chess.'

Nakamura's first Grand Slam victory may have come sooner than most people had expected, but it would be silly to say it came out of the blue. Already at the Tal Memorial and the London Chess Classic he had demonstrated a stability and maturity that predicted a decisive leap forward. Hadn't Anand called him 'a stable top-10 player' in London without any ifs or buts? Still, when he took the lead in Wijk aan Zee (as early as Round 1, in fact, when he defeated Alexander Grischuk with the black pieces in a game that won him the daily 500-euro Piet Zwart prize named after the legendary tournament director who passed away some years ago) and then remained in the lead (sole or shared) or very close to it, there were still pessimists that pointed at his excellent 5 out of 7 start in 2010 that was followed by two unnerving losses. Their fears seemed to be justified when, again in Round 8, this time leading with 5½ out of 7, Nakamura lost a game... against, of all people, Magnus Carlsen. The following notes are based on the Norwegian's demonstration of the game in the press room.

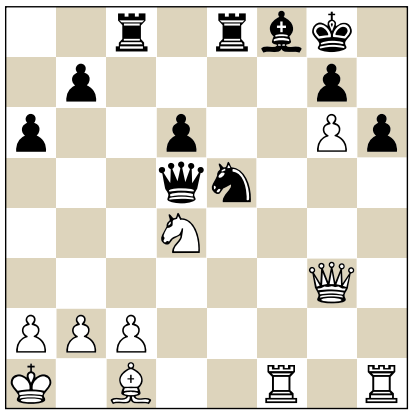
SI 11.2 – B92
Magnus Carlsen
Hikaru Nakamura
Wijk aan Zee 2011 (8)

1.e4 c5 Carlsen repeated Nakamura's words of last year when the American showed his win against Shirov and said that since he needed to win (as at that point Shirov was in the lead with the wonderful score of 5½ out of 6), Shirov's decision to play the Sicilian was probably not the wisest choice. **2.♘f3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♘xd4 ♘f6 5.♘c3 a6 6.♗e2** The day before this game, against Anand, he chose 6.g3, which didn't work very well. **6...e5 7.♘b3 ♗e7 8.♗e3** A tricky sideline that he hoped Nakamura wouldn't know too much about. **8...0-0 9.g4** The point of refraining from castling on the last move. **9...♗e6 10.g5 ♘fd7 11.h4 ♘b6** Another option was 11...♘c6 and play a6-a5 quickly. **12.♕d2** He briefly considered 12.f4 exf4 13.♗xf4 d5 14.♘d4 ♘c6, but this is not what you want before you have castled. **12...♘8d7** Seeking counterplay with 12...a5 was another option, but after 13.f4 a4 14.f5 things look very complicated. **13.f4** Allowing the knight to e5, but he didn't want to play 13.0-0-0 because of 13...a5. **13...exf4 14.♗xf4 ♘e5 15.0-0-0 ♖c8 16.♔b1 ♕c7 17.h5 ♖fe8** Preparing ♗f8 and taking the bishop to g7.



18.♔a1 A clever move. White wants to play 18.♘d4 but after 18...♘bc4 19.♕e1 ♕b6 he cannot defend the pawn with 20.♗c1 because of 20...♘a3+ 21.♔a1 ♕xd4. **18...♗f8 19.♘d4 ♕c5?** An unfortunate decision.

After the game Nakamura suggested 19...g6, but in that case, too, White keeps the best chances: 20.hxg6 hxg6, and with his bishop coming to g7, Black is not going to get mated. However, White can play 21.♘xe6 ♖xe6 22.♗e3, the point being that Black cannot go 22...♘bc4 23.♗xc4 ♘xc4 because of 24.♗d4!, followed by ♕h2. **20.g6** There is no direct win for White yet, but strategically the game has been decided. **20...♘ec4** After 20...fxg6 21.hxg6 ♘xg6 22.♘xe6 ♖xe6 23.♗g4 White wins the exchange. **21.♗xc4 ♘xc4 22.♕d3** He has to keep an eye on the black knight, as otherwise ...♘xb2 will follow. **22...fxg6 23.hxg6 h6** White has executed his plan, but there is no direct win yet. **24.♕g3** Carlsen was pleased with this move, which threatens tricks with ♖xh6, followed by g7. **24...♕b6 25.♗c1 ♕a5 26.♖df1** A good move. **26...♘e5** Now 26...♘xb2 doesn't work because of 27.♘xe6 ♖xc3 and now both 28.♕f2 and 28.♕f4 decide. **27.♘d5** Avoiding 27...♖xc3. **27...♗xd5 28.exd5** After this there are simply too many threats, such as ♗xh6, ♖xh6 and ♘f5. **28...♕xd5** A reasonable move at first sight, but now White wins quite easily.



29.♗xh6! gxh6 As after 29...♕xd4 30.♗e3 ♕g4 31.♖h8+ he is mated. **30.g7 ♗e7** Carlsen produced the remaining moves without further thinking. 30...♗xg7 is losing because of 31.♘f5 ♖c7 32.♘xh6+ ♔h7 33.♘f7+ ♔g8 34.♖h8 mate. **31.♖xh6 ♘f7 32.♕g6 ♘xh6 33.♕xh6 ♗f6 34.♕h8+ ♔f7 35.g8♕+ ♖xg8 36.♕xf6+ ♔e8 37.♖e1+** Black resigned.

The Dutch press cared little about why Carlsen lost, and almost instantly Giri-mania hit the country.

While this loss suddenly questioned Nakamura's position in the standings, Carlsen seemed to be fully back in business after a hesitant start. So far, his games against the three Dutchmen had attracted the most attention. In Rounds 5 and 6 he posted his first wins at the expense of Erwin l'Ami, who was highly unlucky in the endgame after a tenacious defence, and Jan Smeets. But these efforts paled in comparison to his sensational loss against Anish Giri in Round 3. 'A clear concentration lapse', Carlsen called his outright blunder after a weakly played opening: 'Even if everything goes wrong at some point, you calm down and make some reasonable moves. First I made a mistake and I had a worse position, then I made a further mistake. But I didn't actually realize that I was worse. The move I made that blundered a piece I made in two seconds. If I had taken another two seconds, I would have found something else to defend my position.'

Giri was obviously delighted to beat the world's number one, but he knew full well what had happened and felt no need to gloat. But the Dutch press cared little about why Carlsen lost, and almost instantly Giri-mania hit the country. Radio and television crews began to arrive in Wijk aan Zee and the next day Giri's win was front page news both in the biggest newspaper *De Telegraaf* (including a photo) and 'quality paper' *NRC Handelsblad* (which had two photos, one of Giri and one of Carlsen).

Contrary to what many, including himself, hoped and expected after his win over Nakamura, Carlsen soon dropped out of the race for first place when in Round 10 he avoided a repetition against Ian Nepomniachtchi and was punished for his courage in the endgame, which the Russian champion, in Carlsen's words, 'played very well'. The only consolation for the Norwegian in the final rounds was his win against Vladimir Kramnik in Round 11. 'I was actually a little disappointed that he didn't defend particularly well, which surprised me a bit. I really wanted to outplay him, but he was making mistakes that he could really have avoided if he had dug his heels in. But of course I am really happy that I won that game. Then I thought, no matter what happens in the last two rounds, at least I have achieved something in the tournament.'

And contrary to what many people, and in this case definitely not including himself, had feared, Hikaru Nakamura didn't collapse after his loss against Carlsen at all. First he made a slightly shaky draw with the white pieces against Anand, who got a clear edge but failed to come up with a concrete way to exploit his advantage, and then he defeated Maxime Vachier-Lagrave and Nepomniachtchi in great style. With these wins he moved back into the sole lead again, a position he successfully defended with two further draws, an ultra-solid 20 moves against Kramnik and the aforementioned last-round game against Wang Hao.

Nakamura welcomed his triumph as both a personal victory and a great

opportunity for American chess: 'The fact that so many people are following it back in the States means a lot to me. I feel, for better or for worse, that I am the face of American chess right now. It means a lot to me that people care. Fortunately I was able to finally break through and win this event. If I had to pick from the tournaments I played recently this is probably the one I wanted to win the most. A lot of people in the U.S. have considered me to be very strong for several years now. I got my rating by playing a lot of the Swisses. I think it's good and bad, it's necessary because it taught me how to win a lot of games when I was younger, and at the same time, once I started playing in Europe more I had to sort of start changing my style a little bit, picking my chances in specific games as opposed to trying to win everything. Now that I have finally won a major tournament ahead of all the other top players in the world, I guess that everyone realizes that I am a potential threat to the European dominance of chess.'

And as we talked about his recent growth and his current stability, his loss of interest in blitz and his focus on classical chess, it was difficult not to bring up his old image of a street-fighting youngster, even if he himself has grown slightly tired of the subject. '(With a wry smile) A lot of people inconveniently like to remind me of that at every opportunity they have. Everyone has those moments when they're younger, when you're not the best behaved, I had that period in my life. I think it's also why I got so good at chess originally, but like with my whole style in general, certain things you have to learn how to temper everything and find the right mix. In general I am much more calm. But sometimes when I get annoyed I get annoyed and tend to get very self-deprecating and all, like the comments I posted on Twitter after the loss against Magnus. But for the most part I don't get angry over games like I once did, I think that's helped me a lot. When you're much more balanced, it just makes life a lot easier.' To which he added with a broad smile: 'It's probably a good thing that Twitter only came around the last couple of years instead of 10 years ago.'

Talking about his role in American chess and his responsibilities, it was inevitable for one name to pop up. 'Yes, if it wasn't for Fischer I am pretty sure I'd never gotten into chess. There are several generations of American grandmasters before me who probably also wouldn't have become grandmasters or even played chess at all. Fischer definitely is the reason that chess is thriving on a certain level in the U.S. His chess I admire a lot. I mean, as far as all the other stuff that went on later in his life, it's what it is. All geniuses, all people who are incredibly brilliant are also incredibly flawed. You just have to look at the whole picture. What he did for chess, as far as I am concerned, outranks all the negative stuff that he did later on. I would not like to be the model that Fischer was... Having this gift, being so great at chess, it's really nice, but also the chance to inspire kids in the U.S. to get into chess. Hopefully some of them will become really strong. I feel that it's part of my role now to be a role model for kids. It motivates me to be better at chess and to be better as a person every day.'

> 'When you're much more balanced, it just makes life a lot easier.'

His first goal is to be 2800 by the end of the year and if he succeeds in that mission, who knows what's next. For the moment he intends to continue doing what he has been doing faithfully during the past months. He may continue to grow or he may stagnate, but for the moment he excludes nothing.

Nakamura's win was fully deserved and no one begrudged him his success, but despite his high score (+5, last year +4 was enough for first place, in the two preceding years +3) it was not a runaway victory. Almost till the very end there were at least three (or four, you never know with Carlsen and last rounds) rivals who had every reason to think that they might qualify for the Grand Slam Final in Bilbao in September.

Vishy Anand burst away with 4 out of 5 and didn't lose a single game, but it wasn't enough. Anand's evaluation was a mix of realism and self-criticism: 'It's hard to be upset with yourself over a +4 score. I think in 2006 Topalov was +5 in the last round, I was +4 and I won and caught up with him. This time it didn't happen. And of course in 1999, I was on +6 and still only second, because Kasparov was +7. In general Hikaru was deviating much more, I was maybe slightly predictable. It's not a bad thing as such, but maybe that's what in the end made the difference; that he was able to win a few more games. But I am not sad, I think I even gained some rating, but when you're on +3 after five rounds you hope for more.'

His main explanation for the higher scores compared to the past few years were the poor form of Alexander Grischuk and Alexey Shirov and the great number of games that they lost. For Shirov his return to Wijk aan Zee was a rude awaking. Last year he won his first five games, this time he lost three of his first four games and ended up losing a total of six.

The only game in which Anand was in danger was the encounter with Anish Giri in the penultimate round. For the technical details we gladly refer

you to the young Dutchman's outstanding notes, but this is what Anand had to say: 'It's one of those days when you just try to play some chess and you start drifting. At some point I felt I was drifting here and there with white and it wasn't really clear what I was doing. I wasn't even sure that his move ...b5 was correct, but within a couple of moves I managed to get myself confused. Now I don't know if I never had anything or if I played badly. It was important to save it, not to spoil such a good tournament.'

Vladimir Kramnik also seemed to be heading for an outstanding performance (just have a look at his marvellous attacking win over Shirov) until he lost his marbles in his game against Carlsen. Till that point he was happy about his chess and felt physically fit. Much to his relief he had carefully stayed out of reach of the main threats in Wijk aan Zee, catching a cold or going down with the flu. He felt he was fighting for first place and then in one sad afternoon he blew his chances. 'Unfortunately there is always something happening to me in Wijk aan Zee, that something goes wrong. I don't know why. It always was a tournament where I dropped something like 15 rating points and then all year long I had to try to get them back. Which I usually managed by the end of the year, only to drop another 15 in Wijk aan Zee. But in the last two years I even won some rating points, which is already a big achievement. But still there is a feeling of dissatisfaction. I felt pretty well, I was full of energy and my chess level was not bad at all. That is, as it could be when you're not trying to show everything that you have because of the Candidates' matches. Everything went smoothly until the last rounds. Maybe it's because it's a long tournament and I don't manage to remain as fresh as my young opponents, although I didn't feel it that way. But perhaps my body or brain have a different opinion. Maybe this is the reason. But it's a pity. If I had made a draw with Magnus, it would have been a good tournament. And if I had made plus-1 in the last three games, it would have been a brilliant tournament. And I had good chances, but I managed to spoil it all myself. I have my ideas how to avoid it and I will try to get rid of this strange habit before the Candidates' matches.'

While Kramnik was critical of his own overall performance, he was full of praise for the winner. 'I can see that he is working very hard to improve his chess. I was not so optimistic a couple of years ago, but now I see that he has become a much more complex player, much more universal. I like this attitude. It's an attitude that bears fruit and it is not very typical for young players. I really wish for him that he keeps on working like this. This is something I appreciate a lot, when people give a lot to their game. They give all they have to improve themselves. This has always been my own attitude and I like to see this serious and significant change in him. To me that shows that he really has chances to reach the very top of the chess world. Now he understands that real success is not when you become a hero on ICC, but when you become World Champion or win a tournament like Wijk aan Zee. And mostly when you start to work on such improvements, you also mature as a human being. He will be a very serious challenger pretty soon. Which is excellent to extend the geography of chess. We badly need an American star. He is an entertaining chess player and the general public likes his games. So all I can do is congratulate him with this success and tell him not to stop and think that it is done already.'

Quite a compliment. Doesn't he have any criticism? Well, Kramnik is not a man attracted by fads such as Twitter, but he even forgives Nakamura the occasional tweet: 'I understand that he sometimes still posts slightly cheap things on Twitter, but this I cannot say from my own experience, as I don't follow this. Maybe it's not that bad, as this is the level of the people who follow this, as far as I know. Guys who are creating their image of life out of Twitter will not understand anything deeper. So that is OK, he is probably aware of that.'

NEW IN CHESS

Vishy Anand: 'I am not sad, I think I even gained some rating, but when you're on +3 after five rounds you hope for more.'

Slightly less conspicuous, but always within sight of overall victory, was Levon Aronian, the only other player besides Anand to remain unbeaten. Rated 2805, there is no doubt that the Armenian is an awesome force who will play a prominent role in the up-

coming Candidates' matches in Kazan. In Wijk aan Zee the insiders were expecting him to surreptitiously climb up in the standings and grab first place in the final weekend. It didn't happen, and this is why he believed it didn't happen: 'I was trying, but in general I was not really going for it. I was trying to play well, but I had some mental block. I felt that I was not playing with my full power. It's hard to explain, maybe the reason is that I have more important events in front of me. One of the most important things that ever happened to me is going to come. I want to play well in every tournament. On the first day, when I was playing Magnus, in another tournament I would try to grab my chance, I would be more alert. Here I was kind of relaxed. Too relaxed. It's not that I failed here, I was just overly cautious. I survived 13 rounds, and had a good score. Every time you don't lose rating with 2800, it's a good result.'

Much could be written about the other participants. About Ian Nepomniachtchi, whose Tata top group debut was a mixed experience. Or about Maxime Vachier-Lagrave, who is also rapidly becoming a stable force among the world elite (don't miss the notes to his win against that same Nepomniachtchi and the spectacular move that clinched the issue), but the final lines will be dedicated to Anish Giri.

The young Dutchman rightly pointed out that it wasn't the fact that he scored 50 per cent that he was happy about, but the fact that it wasn't a 'creepy 50 per cent' but the sum-total of 13 real flesh-and-blood games. With his win against Carlsen he created a media frenzy, while his gripping battle with the World Champion was perhaps the best proof of his phenomenal talent. Giri even came close to winning, but never claimed that he deserved to. 'Of course, the whole game it was clear that it was me who is pushing and I was thinking I was going to win, but I never saw how.'

One of the most remarkable aspects of his self-confident performance was the new territory that he entered. Of the 13 opponents that he faced he had only played three(!) before, his countrymen l'Ami and Smeets, and Vachier-Lagrave. If he was nervous he never showed it, and whatever nerves he may have had he shook off after he beat Carlsen. 'After that I just felt fine. I think it's important that you don't feel like the underdog in such tournaments, because once you feel it they all feel it and it only gets worse, and you will be fighting for last place.'

Psychological strength seems to be one of his great assets. For instance, on the eve of the tournament he explained why he always seemed to be in a good mood, even after a loss. 'If I win I am mostly in a good mood, but if I lose I also think I should be in a good mood, because otherwise I will really get in a bad mood, and that leads nowhere. You have your own mood and what you show other people. If you feel bad on the inside, but you show a happy person on the outside, you already feel better yourself.'

> Levon Aronian: 'I was trying to play well, but I had some mental block.'

Giri lost two games, against Nepomniachtchi, when he spurned a repetition, and against Kramnik, the opponent he felt most in awe of before the tournament. Yet these two losses didn't unbalance him either. 'Because I knew I saw other things during those two games as well. In the first game I played too riskily, because I was a bit too optimistic at that point. I had almost beaten Nakamura, who was the leader, so it felt too good. But after that loss I calmed down a bit. Against Kramnik I was again not so careful in the opening, a bit overambitious. But I defended very well and frankly I had a draw in that game. So these were not losses that bring you down, they only make you angry. I was fully confident that it was going to stop.'

All in all, he admitted that his result was more or less what he had expected. 'The result is fine. Plus-1 would have been nicer, +2 even more, and +3 too, but it was completely fine to have 50 per cent.'

Although it was his Grand Slam debut, Giri played with great conviction and remained true to his style in all his games. This attitude and the results that came with it won him no mean compliments. Such as this one from Magnus Carlsen: 'I think he played really well, I'm impressed. I was impressed by the fact that it is not easy to find weaknesses in his play.'

Or this one from Vishy Anand: 'It wouldn't have surprised me if he had shown nerves in his first big event, but the fact that he coped well doesn't surprise me either. I don't think you should read too much into this result one way or another. In my opinion, if it hadn't happened it would have happened sooner or later, but it did happen. That's all.'

What the future holds in store for Giri no one knows. For the moment he isn't attracted to the life of a professional chess player. He feels he has had a taste of that life in his school holidays when he could totally concentrate on chess and noted after a week that he felt 'a bit miserable'. For him there is more in life than only chess, and he thinks he will follow his parents' wish and go to university two years from now. The day after the Tata Steel tournament he went home, in transit from his excursion into chess professionalism to everyday life. The following day he went back to school again.

NOTES BY
Hikaru Nakamura

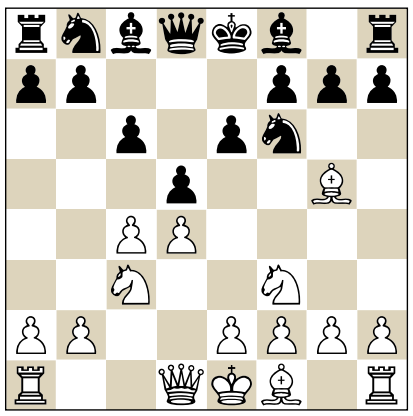
SL 7.8 – D44
Hikaru Nakamura
Jan Smeets
Wijk aan Zee 2011 (7)

This Round 7 game against Jan Smeets was one of the most important games of the tournament for me. With upcoming games against Magnus and Vishy in Rounds 8 and 9, I had to try and maximize my chances by winning this one.

After Jan's great win against Alexey Shirov in the first round, it came to everyone's attention that the preparation came from his second for the tournament, German GM Jan Gustafsson. Having suffered one of my worst losses in my chess career against Gustafsson (22 moves with white) in the Austrian League, I resolved with my second Kris Littlejohn that we were going to bust his preparation at all cost.

As this game shows, being a strong GM does not mean you understand all the nuances of variations which engines come up with when you need to let them think!

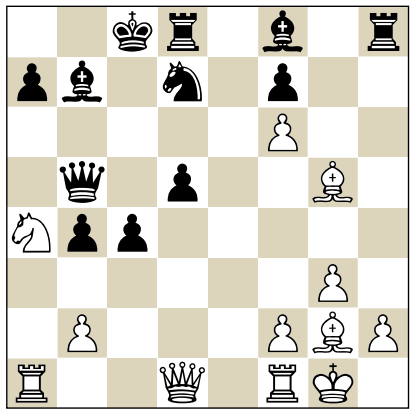
1.d4 d5 2.c4 c6 3.♘f3 ♘f6 4.♘c3 e6 5.♗g5



5...dxc4

No surprises thus far, as we go right into the Botvinnik Variation of the Slav!

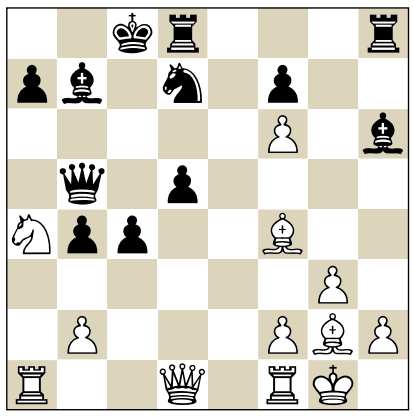
6.e4 b5 7.e5 h6 8.♗h4 g5 9.♘xg5 hxg5 10.♗xg5 ♘bd7 11.g3 ♗b7 12.♗g2 ♕b6 13.exf6 c5 14.d5 0-0-0 15.0-0 b4 16.♘a4 ♕b5 17.a3 exd5 18.axb4 cxb4



19.♗f4!?

This idea had been played a few times before, but only now has it truly come into focus. Oddly enough, I had looked at this variation before the tournament in case I had white against another Dutch player, Erwin l'Ami! It goes without saying that I was profoundly unhappy when Anish Giri and his second Vladimir Chuchelov found this idea for his game against Jan Smeets and ruined my surprise party!

19...♗h6



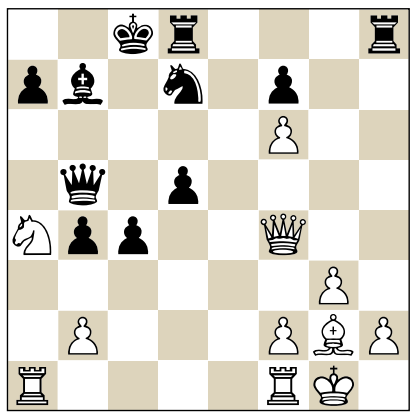
20.♕d2!?

When I prepared this with my second, Kris Littlejohn, we overlooked that a 2600 GM had actually played this just after the start of 2011!

The alternative is 20.♗d6 ♗f8 21.♗e7 ♗xe7 22.fxe7 ♖de8 23.♕d4 (23.♖e1!?) 23...♖h6 24.♖fe1 (after 24.b3 ♖xe7 25.♖fc1 ♘e5 26.♘c5 c3 27.♖xa7 ♘c6 28.♕g4+ ♖he6! was a very strong idea from Giri-Smeets. White might stand better, but in practice it is very easy for Black to play) 24...♖e6 25.♗h3 ♖8xe7 26.♗xe6 fxe6 27.f4 ♕c6, which is another mess. It is very hard to evaluate this position correctly. After looking at this the night before the game, I felt that it was just too easy for Black to play. If I was a computer, I would happily go for this line, though!

20...♗xf4 21.♕xf4

The critical position. If you look at this position with any engine (Rybka, Houdini, Fritz) 21...d4 is never the top move here. However, if you plug in the move it is immediately clear that it is the best. One might ask why I would allow this continuation if it leads to nothing more than probable equality? The answer to this question is that Kris did not notice the idea. I was thinking about the position while, of all times, I was showering shortly before the round, and suddenly noticed this d4 move. My immediate thought was, why haven't I looked at it?? With only 10 minutes to spare when I got out of the shower, we failed to come up with anything concrete. Nevertheless, it seemed like playing the pot-odds and taking this gamble was worth the risk. To the readers of this esteemed publication, do not worry, I am not planning to take a sabbatical to play poker ☺.

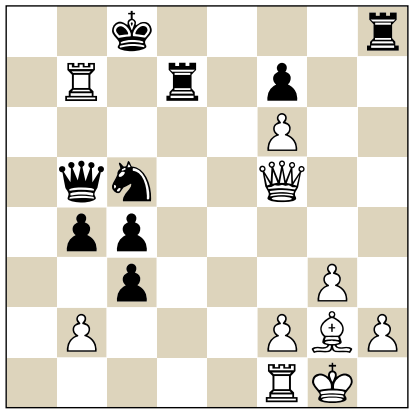


21...♗c6

There are two alternatives. The first one is 21...♘c5 22.♘xc5 ♕xc5 23.♖fe1 ♖d7, as was played in Zakhartsov-Michalczak, New Year's Open 2011, but after the strong 24.h4! Black is close to lost! Therefore, I doubt that anyone will be trying 21...♘c5 anytime soon.

But absolutely the strongest move is 21...d4! 22.♘c3, and now:

A) after 22...dxc3 23.♖xa7 ♕e5 – 23...♘c5 24.♕f5+ ♖d7 invites 25.♖xb7



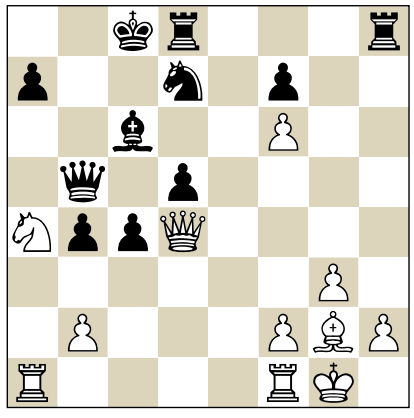
ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

a beautiful combination, as all three Black pieces are pinned – 24.♖xb7 ♕xf4 25.gxf4 cxb2 26.♖xb4 ♘xf6 27.♖xc4+ ♔d7 28.♖b1 ♖b8. I assume Black should draw the endgame, but I can at least still apply some pressure.

B) 22...♕e5! 23.♗xb7+ ♔xb7! (definitely the best move!) 24.♕f3+ ♔b8 25.♘d5 ♕h5 26.♕xh5 ♖xh5 27.♘xb4 ♔b7 28.♘c2 ♘b6, and Black should be OK in this endgame, but White still has some small pull.

22.♕d4

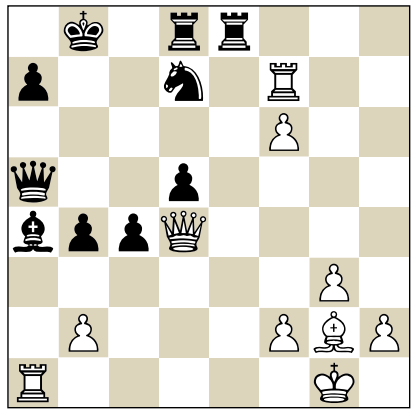
More straightforward was 22.♖fe1! ♕b8 23.♕d4 ♕c7 (after 23...♖de8 24.♘c5! White has an overwhelming advantage and Black can more or less resign within the next few moves) 24.♖e7 ♕a5 25.b3!, and even here Black's position is completely falling apart.



22...♔b8

The computer move is 22...♖de8. It prevents the ♖e1-e7 invasion: 23.♖fc1 ♖h6 24.h4!, and White maintains great prospects going forward. Somehow the silicon programs think Black is only slightly worse, but I cannot think of any human who would want to play this position as Black.

23.♖fe1 ♖he8 24.♖e7 ♕a5 25.♖xf7 ♗xa4



26.♗xd5?

A bad move with time-pressure looming. I had simply overlooked Jan's very obvious reply.

26.h4 is another amazing resource that the computers find instantly. Al-

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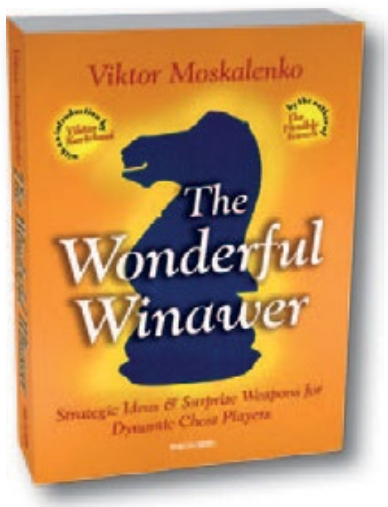

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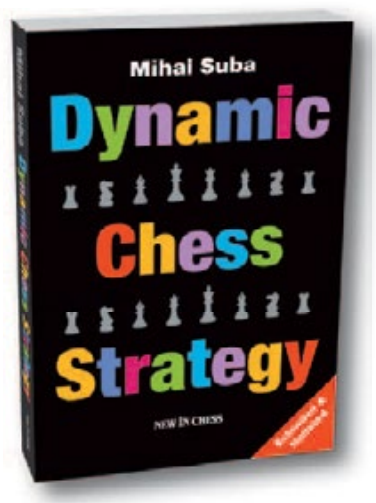

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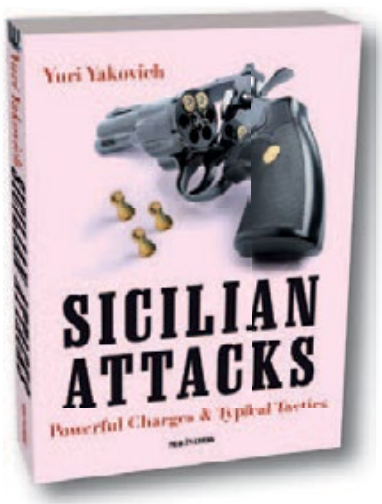

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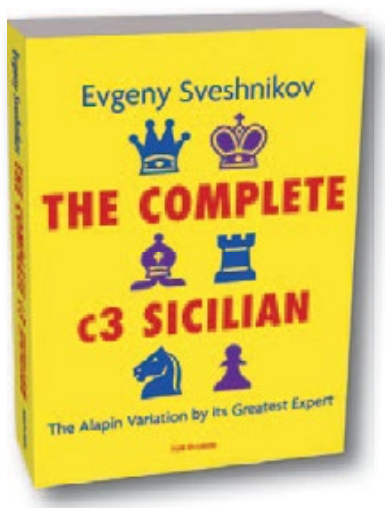

"By far the best book ever written on this opening. Beyond that it teaches a bundle of things about chess in general"
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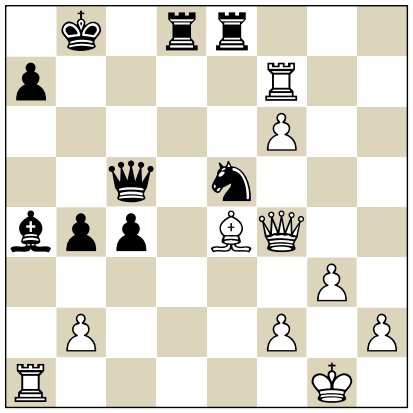
though this move is winning, it is very hard to play a move like this in such a complex position.

26...♕c5

26...♘e5 27.♖b7+ ♔c8 28.♖xa4! ♕xd5 29.♕xd5 ♖xd5 30.♖bxa7 was what I calculated when I played 26.♗xd5. Black stands significantly worse and has a very long road of suffering ahead.

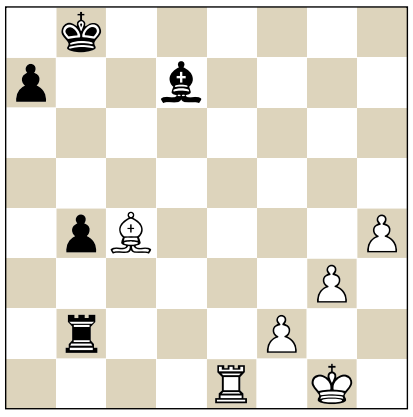
27.♕f4+ ♘e5 28.♗e4



28...♖d7

28...♗d7 is slightly better than the text: 29.♖g7 ♕c7 30.♗g2 and although it is easy to say that this is winning while sitting back in the comfort of a warm apartment and sipping tea, under game conditions and in time pressure I'm not so sure what the actual outcome would have been if this variation had occurred.

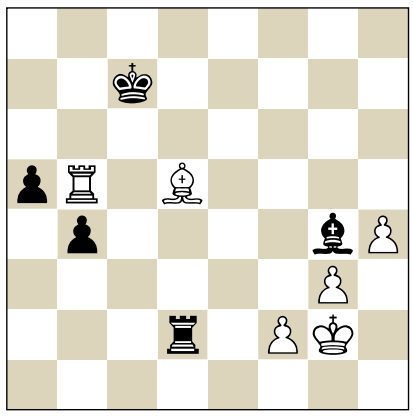
29.♖g7 ♗b5 30.♖xd7 ♗xd7 31.♗g6 ♖f8 32.♖e1 ♕d6 33.♕xe5 ♖xf6 34.♕xd6+ ♖xd6 35.♗f7 ♖d2 36.♗xc4 ♖xb2 37.h4



37...♗g4?

This very obvious-looking move throws away any drawing chances. He should have played 37...♖c2 38.♗d3 ♖c3 39.♗g6 a5 40.h5 ♖c6!, with a very double-edged position. I think White is the only one with winning chances, but it is tricky for both sides.

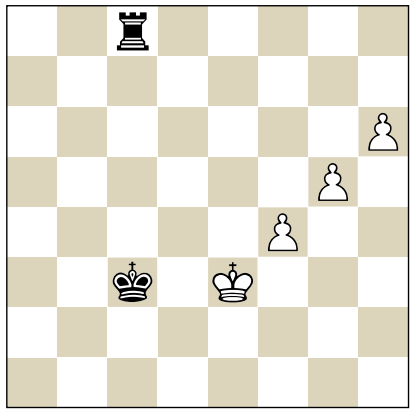
38.♔g2 a5 39.♖e5 ♖c2 40.♖b5+ ♔c7 41.♗d5 ♖d2



42.♗f7!

After this move the endgame is a matter of technique.

42...♗d7 43.♖xa5 ♗c6+ 44.♔f1 ♗f3 45.♖a1 ♔d6 46.♗b3 ♖d3 47.♖b1 ♔c5 48.♔e1 ♔b5 49.♗d1 ♗xd1 50.♖xd1 ♖c3 51.h5 b3 52.♔d2 ♖c8 53.♖c1 ♖f8 54.f4 ♔b4 55.♖h1 ♔a3 56.♔e3 b2 57.g4 ♖c8 58.♖b1 ♔a2 59.♖xb2+ ♔xb2 60.h6 ♔c3 61.g5



Jan resigned here, as the pawns cannot be stopped: 61...♖e8+ 62.♔f3 ♖h8 63.♔e4 ♔c4 64.f5 ♔c5 65.f6 ♔d6 66.♔f5 ♔d7 67.g6.

Although our middlegame play was far from perfect, such messes are commonplace in the Botvinnik, and it makes for really exciting games like this one, which readers and fans alike will enjoy!

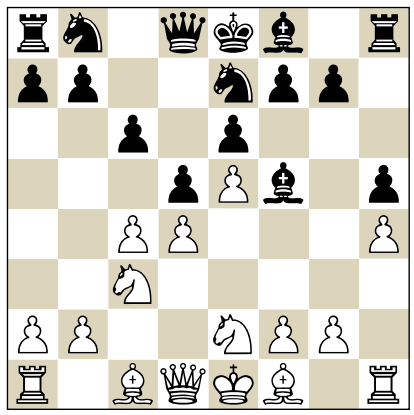
NOTES BY
Hikaru Nakamura

CK 4.15 – B12
Ian Nepomniachtchi
Hikaru Nakamura
Wijk aan Zee 2011 (11)

1.e4 c6 2.d4 d5 3.e5 ♗f5 4.h4

Ian chooses the 4.h4 variation in the Advance Caro-Kann. He has not played this line much, but he did have a very nice victory against GM Sasikiran from India during the Olympiad, so I was not completely surprised by his choice.

4...h5 5.c4 e6 6.♘c3 ♘e7 7.♘ge2



7...♗g4!?

A novelty! I cannot recall where I saw Karpov mention this peculiar move, but it made sense! Why not try something new in such a pressure-packed situation? It's only the most important chess tournament in the world ☺!

My incredibly inspiring previous attempt in this variation, 7...dxc4, was absolutely thrilling...: 8.♘g3 ♗g6 9.♗g5 ♕b6 10.♕d2 ♕b4 11.a3 ♕b3 12.♘ge4 ♘d5 13.♖h3!, Svidler-Nakamura, NH Rising Stars vs. Experience, Amsterdam 2010. Certainly not a game I plan on talking about or ever mentioning again!

8.f3 ♗f5 9.♘g3 ♗g6 10.♗g5 ♕b6 11.♕d2 ♘d7 12.a3!?

This new move took me by surprise. I had looked at other alternatives and concluded that Black should be fine.

12...f6 13.♗e3

After 13.exf6?! gxf6 14.♗e3 0-0-0

Macauley Peterson

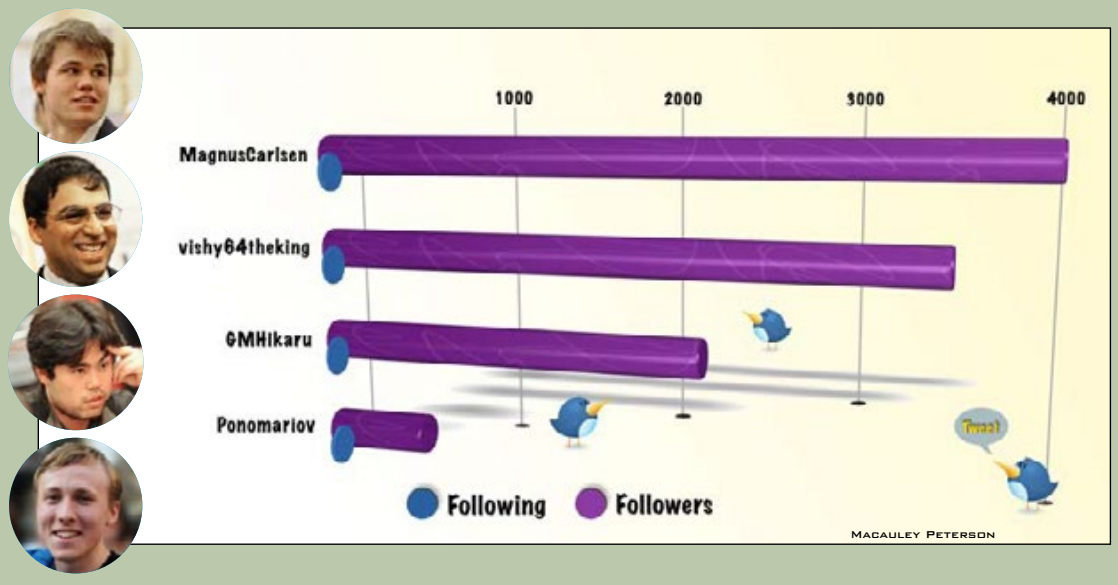
Twittering your way to victory

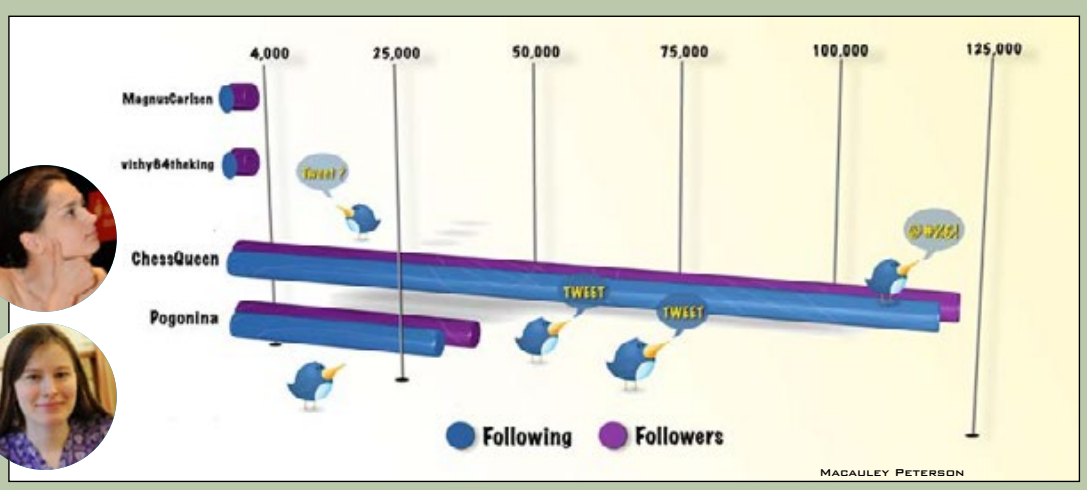
The ability to communicate in o-n-e h-u-n-d-r-e-d a-n-d f-o-r-t-y c-h-a-r-a-c-t-e-r-s (the maximum allowed length of an individual Tweet) has turned into a valuable skill for everyone from activists, to celebrities, to politicians. Are Grandmasters next?

The Tata Steel Chess Tournament included three of the most prominent tweeters in the chess world: Carlsen, Anand, and Nakamura.

But, wait a moment! What does it even mean to be a 'prominent tweeter'?! Well, to begin with, on Twitter you have 'followers' – users who receive your messages – who are 'following' you. You yourself may or may not be following others in turn. If you follow someone, it generally means you're interested in what that person has to say. He or she may be a thought leader, pre-eminent in a field that interests you, unusually funny or clever, and maybe even all of the above.

Once you have followers, it helps to have something worthwhile to say, because, in principle, they're all listening. There are no rules about what you should say, except that it must be brief. Some Twitter users fire off one tweet a week, others once a day, and some, seemingly all the time. Hikaru Nakamura (@GMHikaru) was up to 341 tweets by the time he announced his Tata victory with a resounding 'YESSSSSSSSSSS' (the eleven extra celebratory Ss did not go unnoticed by fans and press alike). He has been one of the more active members of the 2700+ club using the platform, posting frequently both during and between events.





@GMHikaru (Jan23, after losing to Carlsen): 'Pretty sure I could have played anyone or any opening and lost horribly today. Time to refocus and find some energy!'

Twitter users are referred to using the '@' sign in front of their username. Last year in Wijk aan Zee, a certain '@VishyAnand' attracted attention during Corus with running commentary on his ongoing tournament, comments which came as quite a surprise to Anand himself when I pointed it out to him midway through the event! This fake account was subsequently suspended, and since reserving his own moniker '@vishy64theking' the real Anand's

following has grown steadily, despite his relative inactivity.

Magnus Carlsen leads the pack with over 4,000 followers of his succinct travelogue and tournament updates.

@MagnusCarlsen (Jan 17, after losing to Giri): 'Always nice to confirm that I'm still capable of blundering a piece in one move!'

@MagnusCarlsen (Feb 9): 'Perhaps not the best combination. The biggest meal ever at Peter Luger and now fitting for G-Star clothes.'

A few thousand followers may seem like a lot, but none of the world's elite GMs can compete with the twitter chess queen, Alexandra Kosteniuk (@chessqueen), who has amassed a veritable army of followers through active outreach and daily updates.

@chessqueen (Jan 8): 'My Twitter profile is worth $27,974 http://tweetvalue.com @tweetvalue What about yours?'

@chessqueen (Dec 30): '2moro I will #FF anybody who follows both my accts @kosteniuk & @chessqueen to 100K people! Chess is cool!!'

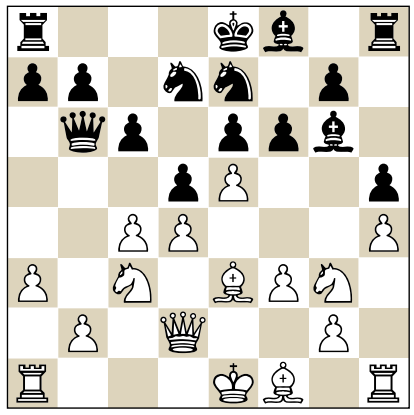
The '#FF' above is a Twitter 'tag' that stands for 'Follow Friday', a Twitter tradition to recommend other kindred spirits to your minions each Friday. Chess may be cool, but having 125,000 people think you are cool is much hotter.

Natalia Pogonina has been less prolific, but still bests Carlsen by a factor of ten. Both she and Kosteniuk have taken the approach that the more people you follow back, the better, and judging by their popularity, perhaps they are right. Still, the notion of 'following' 120,000 people seems rather bizarre – you certainly couldn't possibly care what they all had to say, even if it were feasible to pay attention in the first place. By number of people followed, Kosteniuk ranks among the top hundred and fifty Twitter users in the world! By contrast, some 8,400 people have gathered more followers than she has.

Usually celebrities and influencers within the Twitter-verse are following a handful of people, but are themselves followed by many times more. To some extent that's what defines your prominence; lots of people want to follow what you have to say, even if you don't reciprocate. For an extreme example, consider @GaryKasparov who has over 1,300 followers, despite following no one in return and never issuing a single tweet! Evidently the fact that the real Kasparov spells 'Garry' with two Rs, not one, doesn't bother his followers-in-waiting. Other would-be Kasparovs, @realkasparov and @gkasparov, have been less successful at corralling followers. (Will the real Garry Kimovich please tweet up?!)

So, if you're a top GM looking to connect with fans and the media alike, is it time to join the Twitter parade? Considering how Nakamura, Anand and Carlsen finished first, second and shared third in Wijk aan Zee, perhaps the more superstitious among you will pick up the habit right quick! Happy tweeting! ■

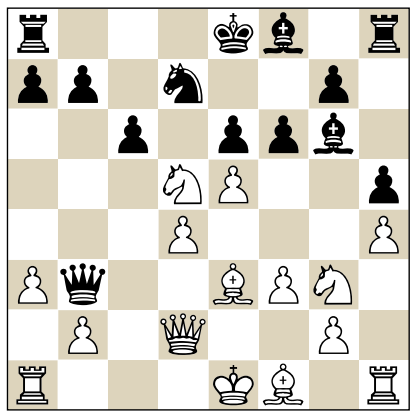
▷ Black has a better pawn structure and should be slightly better here.



13...♕b3

A move I played after a deep think. I was somewhat reluctant to play this after my last adventure in the Caro-Kann involving a queen venture.

14.cxd5 ♘xd5 15.♘xd5



15...♕xd5

15...cxd5 should be fine, but I was worried about the following line: 16.♘e2 (the computers simply laugh at me and wonder why I am so bad at chess! I thought about the position after 16.♖c1!? fxe5 17.dxe5 ♘xe5 18.♖c7 for a while and simply did not want to deal with these complications) 16...♖c8 17.♖d1 (or 17.♖c1 ♖xc1+ 18.♘xc1 ♕c2 19.♕xc2 ♗xc2) and Black should be completely fine here.

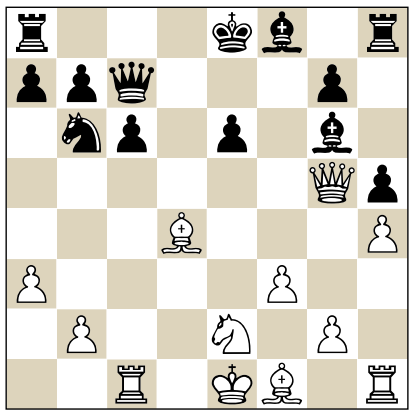
16.♖c1 ♘b6

In case of 16...fxe5 17.♗c4 ♕d6 18.♘e2 ♗e7 Black stands slightly better, but I felt throughout the game that I should keep it as simple as possible unless Ian forced me to go into complications.

17.♘e2

Ian decides that it is now or never and goes for glory! A bold decision.

17...fxe5 18.dxe5 ♕xe5 19.♗d4 ♕c7 20.♕g5



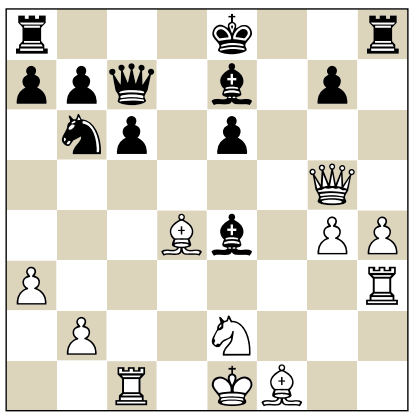
20...♗f5?!

My original idea was 20...♗f7, but then I decided against it because of 21.♗e5 ♕d8 22.♕xd8+ ♖xd8 23.g3. Black is up a pawn here, but it remains to be seen how he can untangle right-away and with weaknesses on g7 and e6, I was not completely sure that I was better.

21.g4 hxg4 22.fxg4 ♗e4?

Right idea, wrong order. The correct order was 22...♗e7 23.♕xg7 ♖h7 24.♕g8+ (24.♕e5 ♕xe5 25.♗xe5 ♖xh4 leads to even better version of the game) 24...♔d7 25.♗xb6 ♖xg8 26.♗xc7 ♗e4. A nice intermediate move which ends the debate.

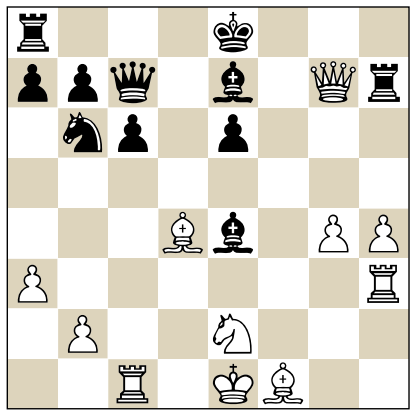
23.♖h3 ♗e7



24.♕xg7?

A serious mistake! After 24.♕e3 ♗d5 25.h5 ♗d6 26.♕g5! leads to a highly unbalanced position with play for both sides. The computers still think Black stands significantly better, but I am not so sure.

24...♖h7

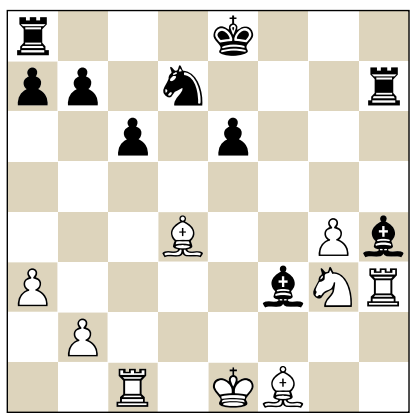


25.♕e5

After 25.♕g8+ ♔d7 26.♗xb6 ♖xg8 27.♗xc7 ♔xc7 28.g5 ♗f5 29.♖cc3 ♗xh3 30.♖xh3 ♖gh8 White cannot keep both kingside pawns.

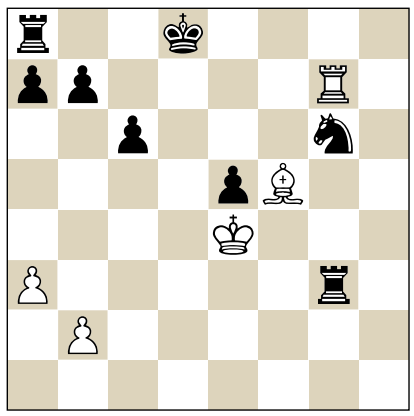
And 25.♗xb6 runs into 25...♗xh4+! (this is what Ian missed when he played 24.♕xg7. I knew there was a reason I played 7...♗g4 after all!) 26.♖xh4 ♕xg7.

25...♕xe5 26.♗xe5 ♗xh4+ 27.♘g3 ♘d7 28.♗d4 ♗f3



Everything quickly falls apart for Ian.

29.g5 ♗g4 30.g6 ♖h6 31.♖xh4 ♖xh4 32.♖c3 ♗f3 33.♖xf3 ♖xd4 34.♗h3 ♘e5 35.♖f6 ♘d3+ 36.♔e2 ♘f4+ 37.♔e3 e5 38.♖f7 ♖d3+ 39.♔e4 ♖xg3 40.♗d7+ ♔d8 41.♗f5 ♘xg6 42.♖g7



NEW IN CHESS

While he was critical of his own performance, Vladimir Kramnik was full of praise for the change in the tournament winner: 'Now he understands that real success is not when you become a hero on ICC, but when you become World Champion or win a tournament like Wijk aan Zee.'

42...♖b8!

The variation 42...♖g5 43.♖g8+ ♔c7 44.♖xa8 ♘e7 45.♗h3 ♖g3 should be winning as well, but I saw no need to allow these potential complications.

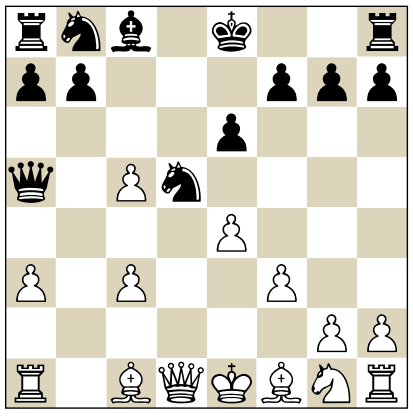
43.b4 b5 44.♗xg6 ♖g5

Ian resigned here. White is out of useful moves and cannot untangle his rook without allowing an exchange.

NOTES BY
Vishy Anand

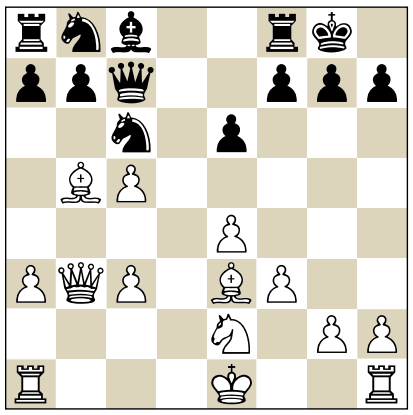
NI 19.11 – E25
Vishy Anand
Wang Hao
Wijk aan Zee 2011 (4)

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘c3 ♗b4 4.f3 d5 5.a3 ♗xc3+ 6.bxc3 c5 7.cxd5 ♘xd5 8.dxc5 ♕a5 9.e4



Repeating Wang Hao's game from Round 3 against Kramnik. I had a trap in mind and was curious to see if I would be able to get it in.

9...♘e7 10.♗e3 0-0 11.♕b3 ♕c7 12.♗b5 ♘ec6 13.♘e2

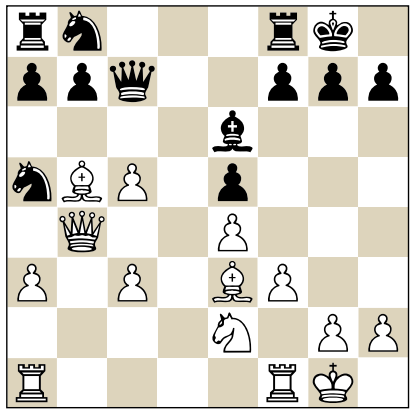


13...♘a5

Kramnik had gone 14.♕a4 the previous day. The difference is that my next move allows 15...♘a6. It depends on what you want to allow. Both moves contain essentially the same idea. White is fighting to keep the pawn on c5 as long as possible and keep an eye on the c4-square. The game between Kramnik and Wang Hao continued 14...a6 15.♗d3 ♘d7 16.♗c2 ♘xc5 17.♕b4 ♘d7 18.0-0 ♘c6.

14.♕b4 e5 15.0-0 ♗e6?

And I get lucky – 15...♘a6 has also been played here

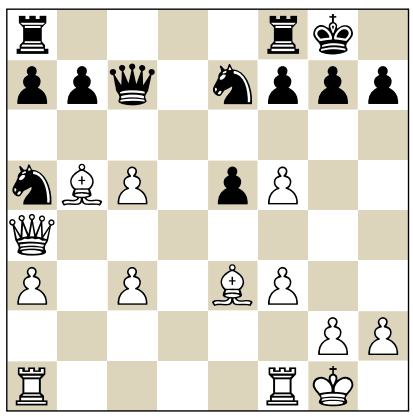


16.♘d4!

The point. This was some of the preparation for Bonn, the match against Kramnik in 2008. Actually we didn't look at it a lot, as we had bigger problems to solve than basking in this position. I wasn't completely convinced it was winning or anything, but it looked excellent for White. If Black takes the piece, White not only gets very strong pawns in the centre, but in addition the pawn on c5 is a very powerful wedge, restraining Black's queenside, and White has the bishop pair while Black's knight is sidelined on a4. All this together should give White more than enough compensation.

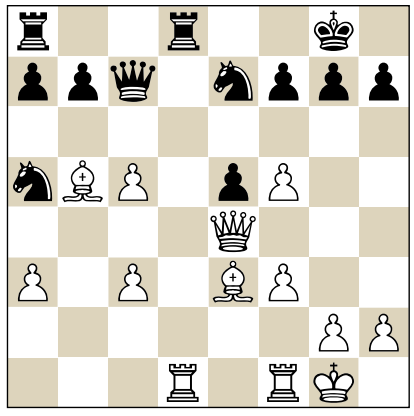
16...exd4

After 16...♗c8 17.♘f5 ♘bc6 18.♕a4 ♗xf5 19.exf5 ♘e7



ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

20.♖ad1 (White can also try 20.f6 ♘d5 21.fxg7 ♖fc8 22.♗f2 ♘xc3 23.♕b4 ♘xb5 24.♕xb5, and even here Black has not reached equality, because White will be able to put a rook on b1, swing the queen to e4 or g4, and Black's king either takes the pawn on g7 at some point and become vulnerable or he has to live with this pawn sitting there, and it's pretty obvious that White is clearly better) 20...♖fd8 21.♕e4

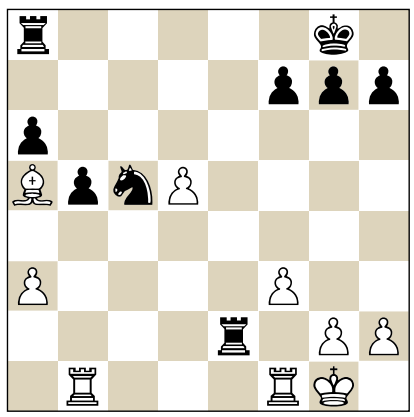


ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

the structure is very nice for White with the two bishops, and Black will have problems along the light squares (for instance after 21...♘ac6 White can go 22.♗c4 hitting f7), or White can simply swap a pair of rooks and then he has the pair of bishops plus an extra pawn, which is very comfortable, even if it's only a doubled pawn.

17.cxd4 ♘bc6

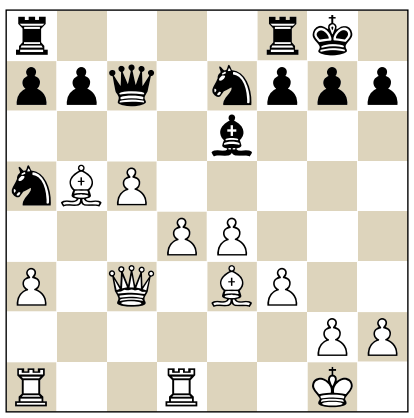
17...a6 18.♗e2 ♖e8 is the comp's suggestion. 19.♕c3 (the continuation 19.♗f2 ♘bc6 20.♕c3 ♕f4! is not easy to understand at first sight, but the queen is well placed on f6 after 21.♖ab1 ♕f6) 19...♘d7 (White is also clearly better after 19...♘bc6 20.d5 ♗xd5 21.exd5 ♕e5 22.♕xe5 ♖xe5 23.dxc6 ♘xc6 24.♔f2 ♖ae8 25.♗xa6 bxa6 26.♖fe1) 20.♖ab1 b5 21.d5 ♗xd5 22.exd5 ♕e5 23.♕xe5 ♖xe5 24.♗d2! ♖xe2 25.♗xa5 ♘xc5



ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

26.♖fc1! with a huge endgame edge, for example 26...♘b7 (on 26...♘d3 27.♖c7 is very strong, as the rook helps the pawn advance) 27.♗b4 a5 28.♗e1 ♘d6 29.♗g3 ♘f5 30.♗f4! ♘h4 (30...♖ee8 31.♗c7) 31.♔f1! with the point that if Black now plays 31...♖xg2, I have 32.♗g3, and White is on the point of winning.

18.♕c3 ♘e7 19.♖fd1



19...♖ad8?

A good example of the wrong rook. Better was 19...♖fd8 20.♗f2 ♘ac6 21.♖ab1 (after 21.d5 ♘xd5 22.exd5 ♖xd5 23.♖xd5 ♗xd5 24.♖d1 White is better due to the two bishops, but Black is extremely solid; if 21.♗g3 ♕a5 22.♕xa5 ♘xa5 23.♖ab1 ♗a2!) 21...♕f4 (21...♖d7 22.♗h4!) 22.d5, with a slight edge, because if he now takes with the bishop on d5, I have two bishops against two knights, which is a little something, and if he takes with the knight, 22...♘xd5, then after 23.exd5 ♖xd5 24.♖xd5 ♗xd5 25.♗f1 White is somewhat better thanks to the bishop pair and the weakness of b7.

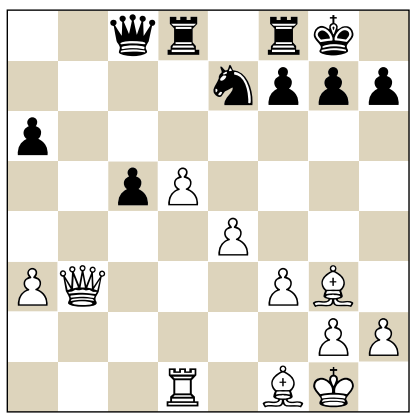
20.♗f2 a6

In case of 20...♘ac6 21.♗g3 ♕a5 22.♕xa5 ♘xa5 White has 23.♗d6. The difference – with the rook on f8, Black is lost.

21.♗g3 ♕c8 22.♗f1 b6

Or 22...♘ac6 23.♗d6, and wins.

23.♖ab1 ♘b3 24.♖xb3 ♗xb3 25.♕xb3 bxc5 26.d5



The rest isn't difficult.

26...♘g6 27.♕b6 f5 28.♗xa6 ♕d7 29.♗b5 ♕f7 30.exf5 ♕xf5 31.♕xc5 ♖c8 32.♕d4 ♖fd8 33.a4

Black resigned. A nice win before the rest day: on +2, I was feeling confident at this stage!

NOTES BY
Vladimir Kramnik

SO 4.3 – C45
Alexey Shirov
Vladimir Kramnik
Wijk aan Zee 2011 (6)

The Scotch Game is again becoming popular – apparently, as a counterweight to the 'Berlin'. Of course, on the one hand, from this I experience a secret pride, but on the other hand, bewilderment: as I have already said many times, if my opponents were to choose only the 'Berlin' against me, I would play exclusively 1.e2-e4. Many are accustomed to analysing by first pressing keys, but the Berlin is a variation in which the computer is practically helpless: one has to think in plans, in set-ups, which is not very customary in particular for young modern players.

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.d4 exd4 4.♘xd4 ♘f6 5.♘xc6 bxc6 6.e5 ♕e7 7.♕e2 ♘d5 8.c4 ♘b6 9.♘c3 ♗b7

A relatively fresh continuation. In the first round I played this against Nepomniachtchi. He chose 10.♗f4, and after 10...g6 a complicated position was reached, in which it was rather Black who was playing for an advan-

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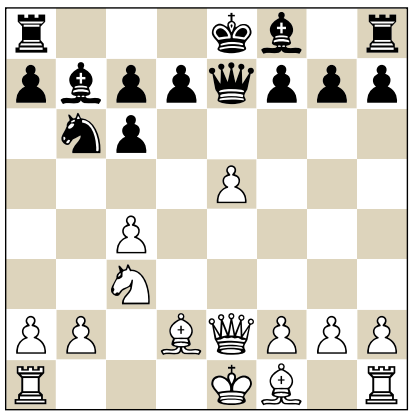
tage. 9...♕e6, or first 9...♗a6 and then ...♕e6, is usually preferred. The main idea of the prophylactic 9...♗b7 is that I prepare ...g6. After the immediate 9...g6 the reply 10.♘e4 is very unpleasant, whereas now this move is met by 10...0-0-0.

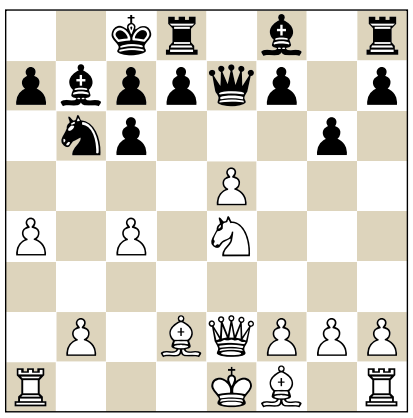
10.♗d2



10...g6

Here 10...♕e6 or 10...0-0-0 has usually been played – in both cases Black's position is dangerous. I caught Alexey unawares. He thought for a long time, about which I was very pleased: I had made a thorough analysis of this position – I can now reveal the secret – with Sergey Karjakin before the Olympiad. Although, of course, knowing my game with Nepomniachtchi, Shirov could have anticipated that after 10.♗d2, possibly, there would follow 10...g6. But, apparently, in the course of the tournament he did not have time to make a proper analysis of this position. I was happy: playing 'at sight' here is quite difficult, and in this case home preparation is a serious advantage. Nevertheless, Alexey played in the most critical way, following the first line of my analysis.

11.♘e4!? 0-0-0 12.a4



The correct decision, as otherwise it is hard for White to achieve anything real.

12...♗a6

Black also, it has to be admitted, has little choice: a4-a5 was threatened. Now White has, so to speak, 'a million moves' – at any event, in my analysis eleven were considered. I will give a little bit of guidance: the main idea of the position is that the c4 pawn is not hanging as strongly as it appears.

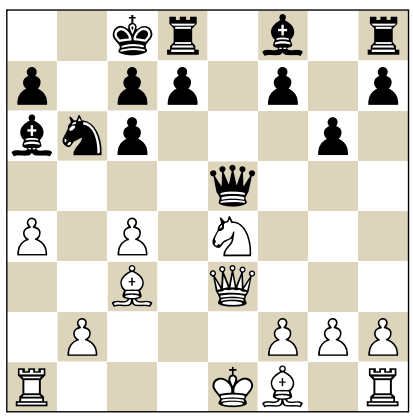
13.♕e3

The most forceful reply, aimed at refuting my idea. Black's initial feeling

> 'One has to think in plans, in set-ups, which is not very customary in particular for young modern players.'

is that his chosen strategy has been a complete failure. But in such cases sometimes it happens that tactics come to the rescue.

13...♕xe5 14.♗c3



14...♗b4!

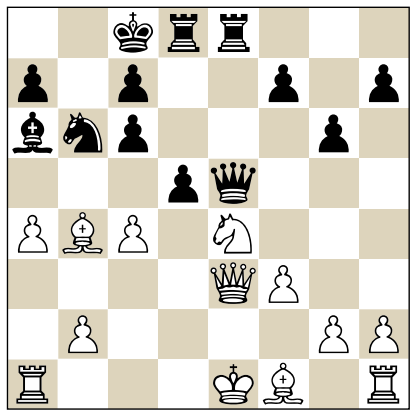
Here for a long time Alexey did not record my move, and with his pen in his hand he stared at the board. Indeed, it is hard to believe that Black is not losing.

15.♗xb4 ♖he8 16.f3

There are also alternatives – 16.♗d3, 16.0-0-0, but it seems to me that everywhere Black maintains the balance.

16...d5

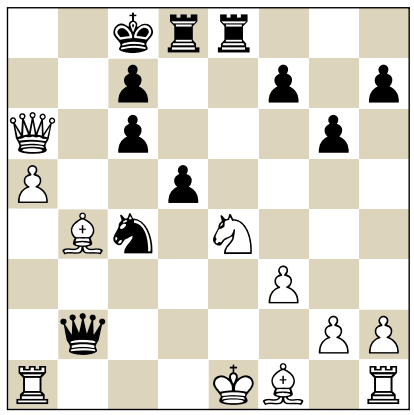
16...♕xb2? runs into 17.♗c3.



17.a5

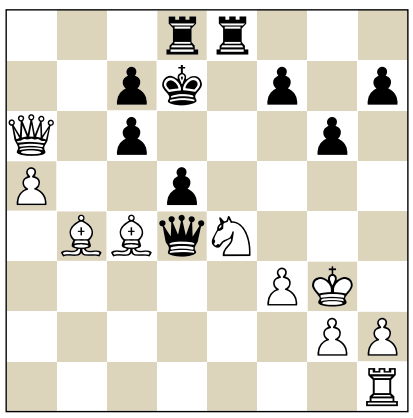
I think that now White is not better – he has to forget about winning. I considered the main line to be 17.cxd5 ♗xf1 18.♔xf1 cxd5 (18...f5) 19.a5 ♘d7 with a seemingly rather dangerous position for White, which Shirov did not like, as he admitted after the game.

17...♘xc4! 18.♕xa7 ♕xb2 19.♕xa6+



19...♔d7 Quite a picturesque position. Strangely enough, White already has to work for a draw. Possibly it can be achieved by 20.♗xc4 ♕xa1+ 21.♔f2 ♕d4+ 22.♔g3

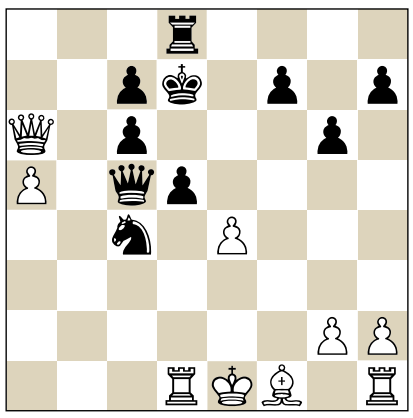
Alexey Shirov had a disastrous result, but that didn't stop him from having a laugh with Indian grandmaster Surya Ganguly.



ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

22...♖xe4 23.♗xd5 ♕e5+ 24.♔f2 ♕xd5 25.fxe4 ♕d4+ 26.♔f3 ♖b8 – White would seem to hold on, but at the board all this is not easy to find.

20.♖d1 ♕xb4+ 21.♔f2 ♖xe4 22.fxe4 ♕c5+ 23.♔e1 ♕b4+ 24.♔f2 ♕c5+ 25.♔e1



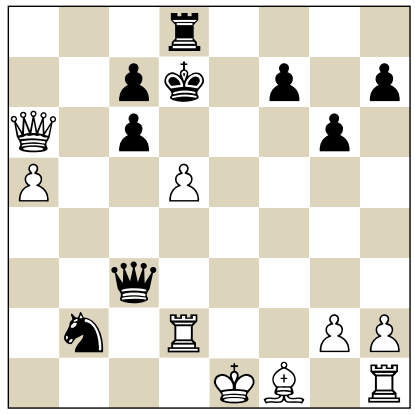
25...♘b2

An interesting move, after which White faces serious problems, although it is possible that with correct play he can still gain a draw. But to demonstrate this with time-trouble approaching was not at all easy.

26.exd5

Shirov was afraid that I would first capture the pawn on e4, then the one on a5, and so he himself captured on d5. He thought that both the middlegame with an exposed king, and the endgame with a piece for four pawns were very difficult for White.

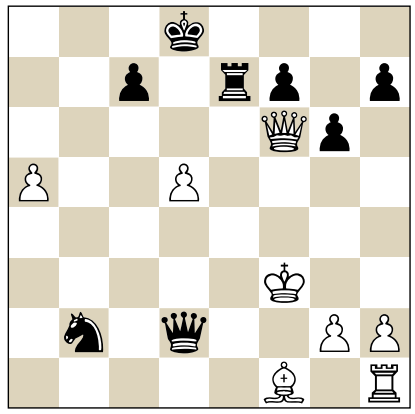
26...♕c3+ 27.♖d2



27...♕c1+

Possibly an inaccuracy. I should have played 27...♖e8+ 28.♗e2 ♕c1+ 29.♔f2 ♕xd2, but after 30.♖b1 I did not notice the move 30...♔e7! with a winning position. Besides, I thought that the move in the game was good enough.

28.♔e2 ♖e8+ 29.♔f3 ♕xd2 30.♕xc6+ ♔d8 31.♕f6+ ♖e7



32.♔g4? This move flabbergasted me. My eyes were dazzled: it appeared that I could win in various ways. But I forced myself to concentrate and find the most accurate solution.

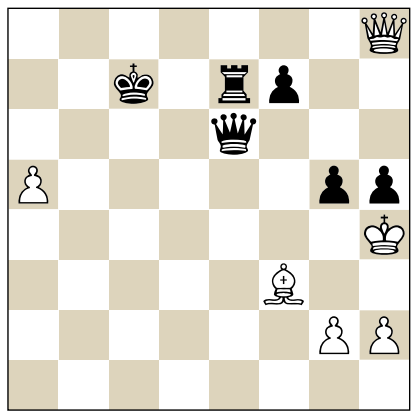
In the event of the forcing 32.♕h8+ ♔d7 33.♗b5+ c6 34.dxc6+ (34.♗xc6+ ♔c7 35.d6+ ♕xd6 36.♕xb2 ♕xc6+ with a rapid mate) 34...♔c7 Black wins.

But after 32.♗a6 the computer does not see a win. 32.d6 also came into consideration. In general, these variations need to be checked.

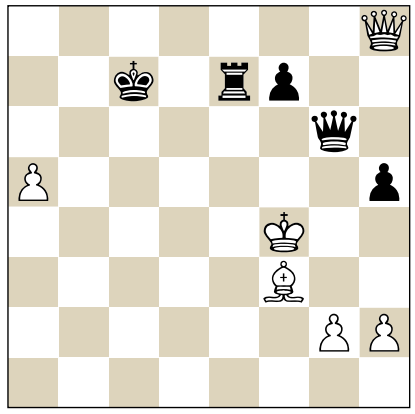
32...♘d1! 33.♕h8+ ♔d7 34.♗b5+ c6 35.♗xc6+ ♔c7 36.d6+ ♕xd6

36...♔xc6 was stronger, with a quick win, but such a move can come to mind only when it is strictly the only one possible.

37.♖xd1 ♕xd1+ 38.♗f3 h5+ 39.♔g3 ♕e1+ 40.♔h3 ♕e6+ 41.♔h4 Or 41.♔g3 ♕e5+. **41...g5+**



42.♔xg5 No better is 42.♔xh5 ♕g6+ 43.♔g4 f5+ 44.♔g3 ♕d6+ 45.♔f2 ♕d2+ 46.♔g3 ♕e1+ 47.♔h3 g4+ and wins. **42...♕g6+ 43.♔f4** White also loses after 43.♔h4 ♖e4+ 44.g4 ♖xg4+ 45.♔h3 ♕f5.



43...f6 The attractive point of Black's combination. He is threatening 44...♕g5 mate. **44.h4 ♖e8**

White resigned.

The idea with the final trapping of the white queen appealed to me!

NOTES BY
Maxime Vachier-Lagrave

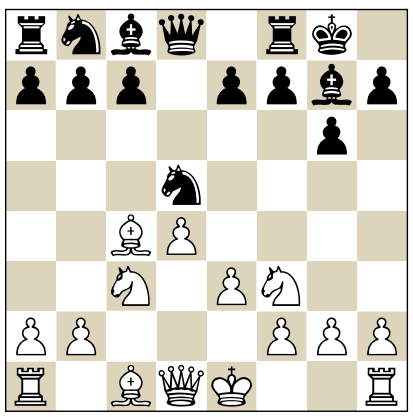
GI 9.3 – D94
Maxime Vachier-Lagrave
Ian Nepomniachtchi
Wijk aan Zee 2011 (12)

This game was very important for me. I had gone back from +2 to +1 two rounds ago, and it was my best chance to win another game here and make my tournament a real success!

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.♘c3 d5

Ian always plays the Grünfeld, which made 1.d4 look extremely tempting.

4.♘f3 ♗g7 5.e3 0-0 6.cxd5 ♘xd5 7.♗c4



This rarely played variation is quite poisonous, and a speciality of Pavel Tregubov's, who was helping me with my preparation during this tournament.

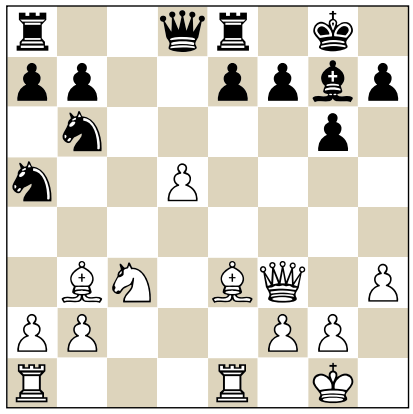
7...♘b6

The alternative is 7...♘xc3 8.bxc3 c5 9.0-0. This is the other choice for Black. More solid and less concrete. We now get into typical Grünfeld stuff, playable for both sides, and much less analysed than the topical lines, which is why I liked it.

8.♗b3 c5 9.0-0 cxd4 10.exd4 ♘c6

Less precise is 10...♗g4 11.d5 ♘8d7 12.h3 ♗xf3 13.♕xf3 ♘c5 14.♖d1, which can get unpleasant for Black with the knight on b6 out of play and a very powerful pawn on d5 that restrains Black's position.

11.d5 ♘a5 12.♖e1 ♗g4 13.h3 ♗xf3 14.♕xf3 ♖e8 15.♗e3



15...♗xc3!

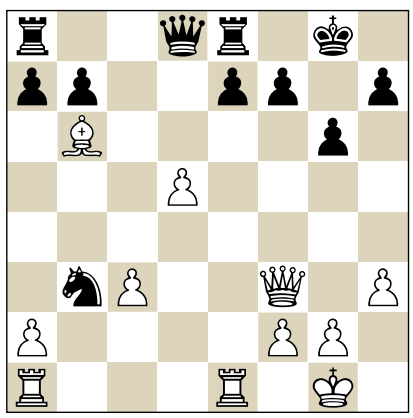
A very important nuance, which I hadn't noticed at first.

White would have an edge after 15...♘xb3 16.axb3 ♗xc3 17.♗xb6! ♕xb6 18.bxc3 ♕xb3 (18...e6 19.dxe6 ♖xe6 20.♖xe6 fxe6 21.c4 can be very unpleasant for Black. The e-pawn is weak and White always has this h4-h5 idea...) 19.♖ab1 ♕c4 20.♖xb7.

16.bxc3?!

I played this move without thinking, but now Black equalizes immediately. The only chance to get something was 16.♗xb6!?, and now 16...♕xb6! 17.bxc3 ♕f6!? 18.♕e3! ♖ac8 19.♖ac1 a6 20.c4 b6 21.♗a4 ♖ed8 22.c5! ♕h4! 23.♗b3 bxc5 24.♖xc5 ♖xc5 25.♕xc5 ♘xb3 26.axb3 ♖d6, and Black equalizes. It was just a matter of two or three accurate moves.

16...♘xb3 17.♗xb6



17...♘d2!

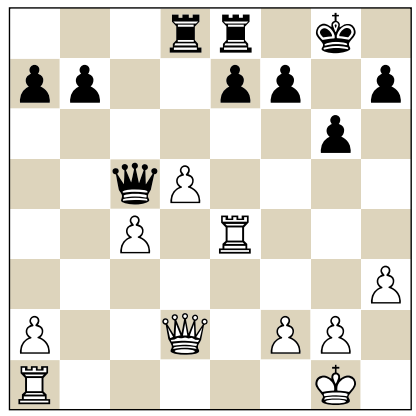
This was the subtlety I had completely forgotten to consider. And I was a bit depressed by the idea of having to make a draw in a few moves.

18.♕d3 ♕xb6 19.♕xd2

The position is equal now. Still, there are some threats on the kingside, as well as against the pawn on e7, which make Black's life still a bit uneasy.

19...♕c5 The simplest way to equality was 19...♖ad8 20.c4 e6 21.♖ad1 ♕c5, for example 22.♖e4 exd5 23.♖xe8+ ♖xe8 24.cxd5 ♕d6, and this is nothing serious for White.

20.♖e4 ♖ad8 21.c4

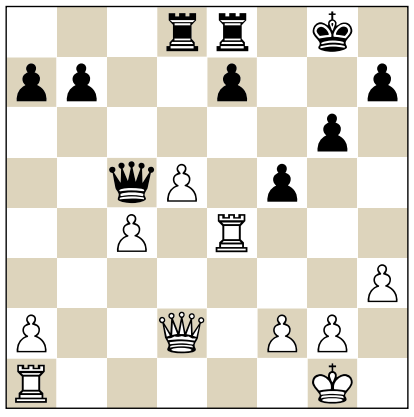


21...f5?

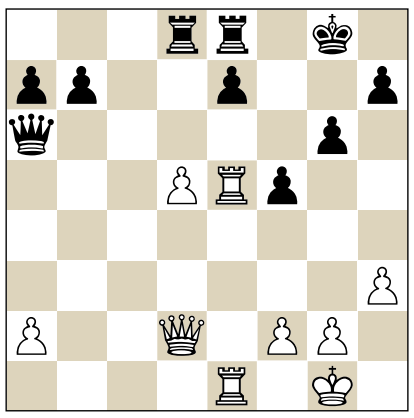
NEW IN CHESS

Maxime Vachier-Lagrave: quite an aesthetic shot.

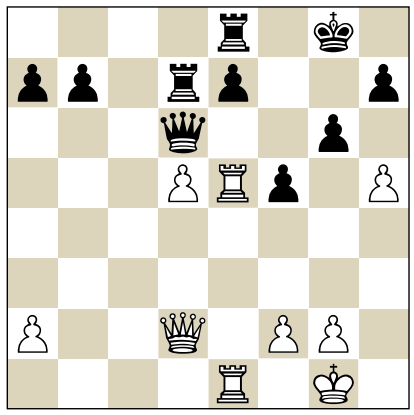
This move I had not even come close to considering, and unsurprisingly it is probably already the decisive mistake.
Correct was 21...e5! 22.♖b1!? f5 23.♖ee1 b6 24.♖ec1 ♖c8 25.♖b3, although White keeps some initiative.
Outright bad is 21...b5?? 22.♕h6! bxc4 23.♖h4, and Black can resign.



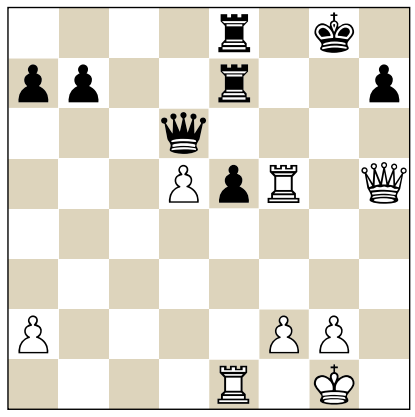
22.♖e5!
Having recovered from the shock, I noticed that the correct idea was fairly simple. White has the choice between either letting Black play ...e5 and free himself, exchange queens or give up the pawn on c4. The choice was fairly easy to make.
22...♕xc4 23.♖c1 ♕a6
This is normally aimed at making it easy to take the queen back to the kingside and also to protect the pawns on the queenside.
After 23...♕h4 24.♖c7 ♕f6 25.♕e3 White is clearly better.
24.♖ce1



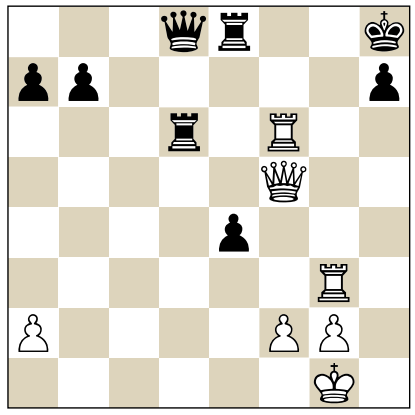
24...♕d6
With a draw offer, which I didn't take long to decline.
After 24...e6 25.♕e3 ♖d6 26.dxe6 ♕xa2 White plays 27.h4! (simple is always best) 27...b5 28.h5 b4 29.h6! ♖e7 30.g3! (threatening 31.♕g5 – the immediate 30.♕g5? ♖dxe6 31.♖xe6 ♖xe6 32.♕d8+ ♔f7 33.♕d7+ ♔f6 34.♕d4+ runs into 34...♔g5! now, which is why White had to play 30.g3) 30...♕a4 31.♕c5 ♕c6 32.♕xb4 White is clearly on top.
Or 24...♕f6 25.♖e6 ♕f7 26.♕b4! b6 27.♕b5 ♔f8 28.♕c6, and Black is literally choked.
25.h4!
This reminds me very much of my game against Rodshtein in Biel (see New In Chess 2010/6). Same pawn sacrifice, same opening and same compensation: a powerful pawn on d5, Black's pieces are forced to be passive to protect the pawn on e7 and a very strong kingside attack as a consequence.
25...♖d7
Black loses after 25...♔g7 26.h5 ♕f6 27.♖e6 ♕f7 28.♕g5 ♖d7 29.d6.
Another road to disaster is 25...♖f8? 26.♖xe7 ♕xd5 27.♕h6 ♖f7 28.♖e8+.
26.h5



26...gxh5 Or 26...♔g7 27.♖e6! ♕xd5 28.♖xe7+, and wins.
27.♖xf5 Bad is 27.♖e6? ♕xd5 28.♕g5+ ♔h8, and things get messy.
27...e5 28.♕g5+ ♖g7
White is technically winning after 28...♕g6 29.♖fxe5! ♕xg5 30.♖xg5+ ♔f7 31.♖xe8 ♔xe8 32.♖xh5. As soon as White's king comes to the centre, it is all over. And Black's rook finds it hard to become active because of the weak pawn on h7.
29.♕xh5 The material is even, but the attack goes on. Now White's plan is either to mate Black or to transpose to a winning endgame by winning a pawn and keeping the pawn on d5.
29...♖ge7



30.♕f3!
Simple and strong, again. The threat 31.♖f6 is impossible to cope with.
30...♖g7 Or 30...e4 31.♖g5+ ♖g7 32.♖xe4 ♖xe4 33.♖xg7+ ♔xg7 34.♕xe4, and wins.
31.♖f6 ♕d8 31...♕b4 doesn't really help either: 32.♖e4 ♕d2 33.d6.
32.d6 e4 33.♕f5 ♖d7
At first sight, I failed to find a forced win. This was a bit too surprising to be believed, so I took a deep breath and checked again.
34.♖e3! ♖xd6 35.♖g3+ ♔h8



36.♖g7!
Quite an aesthetic shot to end the game. Black resigned in view of 36...♔xg7 37.♖f7+ ♔g8 38.♕xh7 mate.
36.♖f7 ♖h6 would have been only much better for White.
And 36.♖h3 ♖d1+ 37.♔h2 ♕e7 38.♖f7 ♕e5+ 39.♕xe5+ ♖xe5 40.♖hxh7+ ♔g8 41.♖fg7+ ♔f8 42.♖xb7 is just not as beautiful, even though it would also have netted the point.

NOTES BY
Anish Giri

GI 1.10 – D76
Magnus Carlsen
Anish Giri
Wijk aan Zee 2011 (3)

At the drawing of lots I took the number 13. Had my name been Garry (or my Elo 2850) I would have been very happy with this number, but the consequences that were attached to the (un)lucky number, was that not only did I have one more game with black than with white, but also that I got to face most of the top players with black. One of those games was against Magnus Carlsen, who was holding the first spot in the Elo list at that point. The game was played in Round 3, just after two tough fights against my relatively new countrymates Jan and Erwin. I remember that at breakfast before the game, we made a joke that now after the two roughest games I would have an easy tournament ahead of me... After this game I thought that perhaps the joke wasn't a good one... there was just a bit too much truth in it!

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6

Magnus was probably surprised with my opening choice. Before the tournament I hadn't been playing the Grünfeld a lot, and in the first round I used the Slav. Captain Hindsight would say that it was a good choice.

3.g3

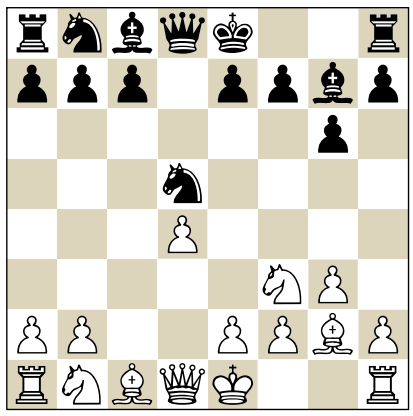
The solid choice that we expected. At the beginning of the game Magnus didn't seem to be very comfortable, or so it appeared to me. He was probably not very happy with the opening on the board, nor with the photographers that were all around him. It was, by the way, a unique experience for me... I have never seen so many photographers in two square metres!

3...♗g7

Another way of meeting the solid line is the very solid ...c6, building the pawn block c6-d5, but I thought that it might be too solid...

4.♗g2 d5 5.cxd5 ♘xd5 6.♘f3

When starting with g3, White has the extra option of e4, followed by the development of the knight to e2. But Magnus decided to transpose to a big main line.



6...♘b6

It seems to be clever to drop the knight back before castling. With this

> 'Captain Hindsight would say that it was a good choice.'

little trick, shown to me by Vachier-Lagrave, I avoid a line in which White plays d5 without e3. Whether it is giving White any advantage is another story, but we chess players are lazy and try to avoid as many things as possible.

7.♘c3 ♘c6 8.e3

8.d5 ♗xc3+ is what I was talking about.

8...0-0 9.0-0 ♖e8

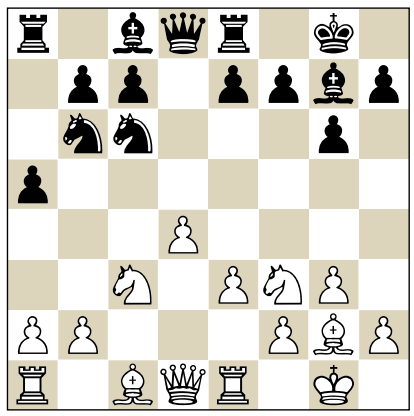
In general, the point of the position here is that Black is supposed to be playing ...e5 one day, and that's how it was played in the early days. Nowadays, however, players on the black side have come to the conclusion that it's better to wait for a better opportunity and hope that they have more useful moves than White.

10.♖e1 The same here. Before, White pushed d5 instantly, but nowadays both sides have realized that ...e5 isn't as good as it looks and that there is no need to hurry. However, notice that after ♖e1, d5 is no longer a threat due to ...♗xc3!, attacking the rook.

10...a5!?

Nowadays this move is played almost exclusively. As I said, 10...e5 seems to be a bit early and Black has to find a useful waiting move. This move has the purpose of advancing the a-pawn further and then...well, nobody knows what then, but still, we all confidently make this move...

10...♗d7 is another way to wait, but it's not exactly clear what's next.

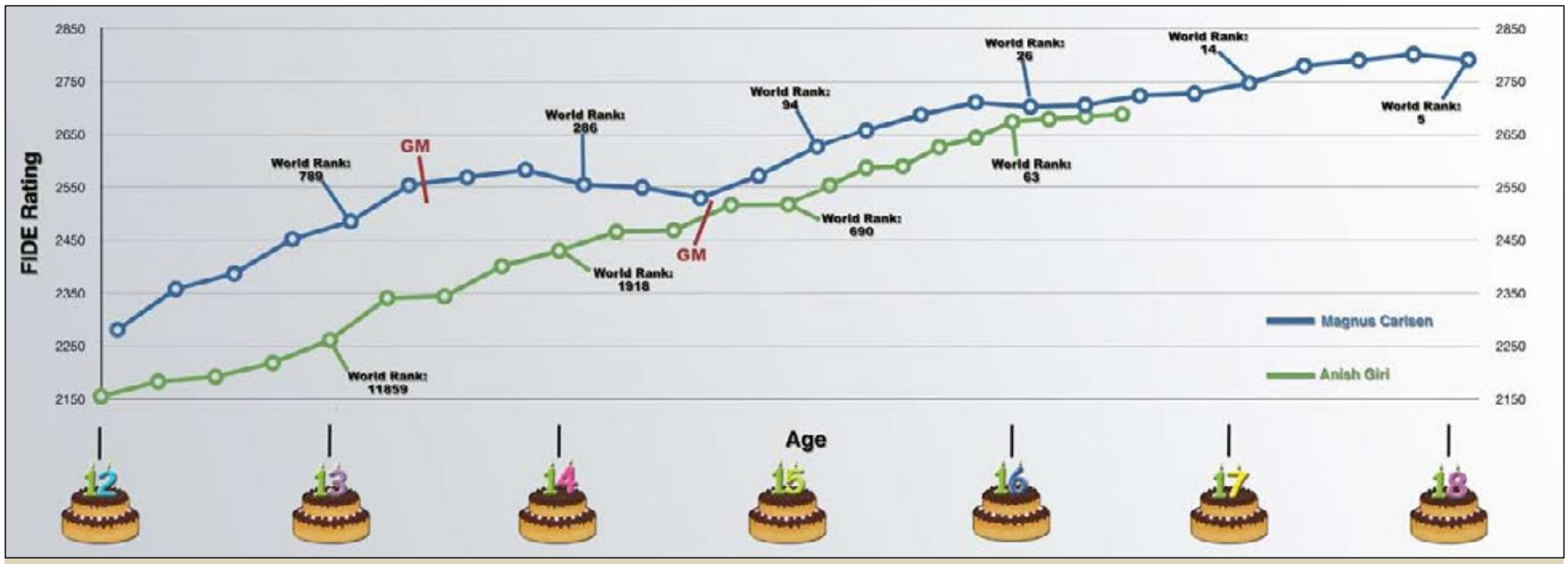


11.♕d2

As somebody joked, Magnus was hesitating between two known moves 11.♕e2 and 11.♕c2 and after some heavy thinking still didn't manage to choose and decided to put the queen in between. In fact the move, which was obviously found over the board, isn't as stupid as it looks, although, frankly speaking, it's clear that it can hardly be a good one. Here I tried not to take the move as a personal insult ☺ and just find the most exact reaction. Then, while going through the variations in my head (something else than calculating... a lazy version of it), I suddenly noticed a trick... And I love tricks, we all love tricks... So I went for it.

11...e5!

The following sequence is more or less forced. I like those sequences... espe-



MACAULEY PETERSON

Food for comparison

Macauley Peterson

Chess fans love to argue, and Anish Giri's surprise victory over world number 1 Magnus Carlsen in Wijk aan Zee re-stoked the flames of debate. Is Giri's ascent equal to Magnus' at the same age? Here's an exchange between two visitors to the ChessGames.com forum during the 2010 NH Tournament in Amsterdam last August:

'Giri is playing at about the same level or better as Carlsen did at 16 and 2 months.'

'I find it very strange that you consider Giri equal (or better) than Carlsen at the same age. Maybe more or less equal, but better?!?'

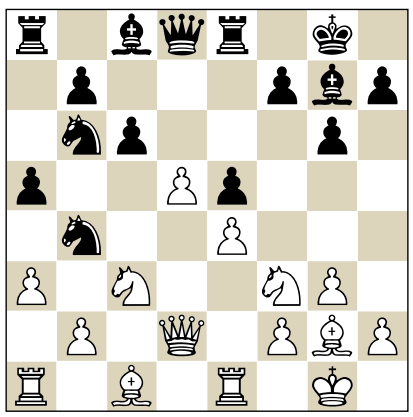
Let's take a closer look. The graph above shows Giri's rating progress (in green) from July 2006 – when he turned 12 years old – up to the Tata Steel Chess Tournament, as well as Magnus Carlsen's graph (in blue) from January 2003 – approximately a month after his 12th birthday – through January 2009, when he was solidly among the Top 5 in the world. Giri has made tremendous strides in the past year. Will he follow Carlsen to 2800?

cially when I calculate that at the end I have a good position!

11...a4 is of course also perfectly fine and Black has no problems whatsoever. Here White will probably go 12.♖d1. I suppose this was the idea. Not so stupid either, by the way, as it forced me to take 11.♕d2 seriously! Of course Black is fine here and there is a big choice of possibilities, but I liked my forced way much more.

12.d5 ♘b4 13.e4 c6 14.a3

And here comes my point.

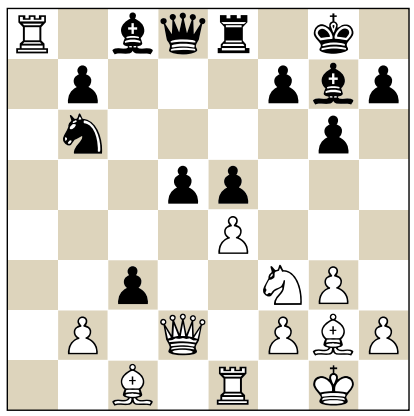


14...cxd5!

I was extremely happy with this idea when I suddenly found it. Now all White's pieces seem to cooperate... with me! And it's a pleasure when the pieces of your 2800+ opponent are working on your side.

15.axb4 axb4 16.♖xa8 bxc3

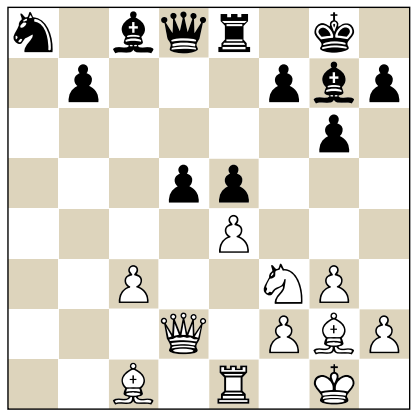
To be honest, I was surprised with how fast Magnus went for this line. I even started wondering that maybe I had missed something somewhere. But, in fact, the point was that White had nothing better than this anyway.



17.bxc3

After 17.♖xc8 it's just like domino's: 17...cxd2 18.♖xd8 dxe1♕+. Note that the queen had to be on d2 and the rook on e1! I liked this variation because it's a direct way of showing why exactly ♕d2 isn't a good move.

17...♘xa8



18.exd5? Without thinking. It's an interesting approach. When you desperately want to avoid a draw, you automatically stop considering the

drawish lines. That you may end up clearly worse is no longer a problem. 18.♕xd5 is just completely equal: 18...♘b6, and it's hard to imagine something else than a draw out of this position. Or 18...♕xd5 19.exd5 ♘b6 20.♘d2, and here too it should be balanced, though I may even prefer White.

18...♘b6

I was a bit confused, but all my moves were easy, so I just kept on playing quickly. Here it became already apparent to me that I was completely out of any danger and that Magnus should be thinking about equalizing.

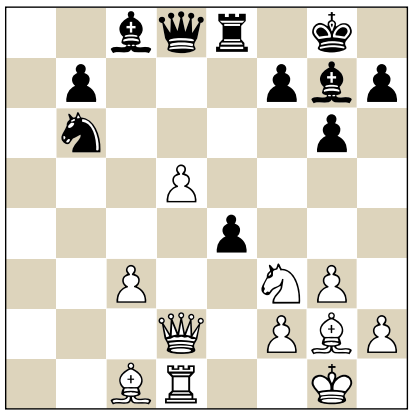
19.♖d1?

Magnus kept on surprising me, but fortunately those were pleasant surprises. After this, clearly bad, move White is already in trouble.

19.d6 or 19.c4 would give White good chances to equalize. But then again, I totally don't understand 18.exd5.

19...e4

The level of my confusion had already risen to its limit, so I just kept on drinking my chocolate milk and making moves that were making themselves.



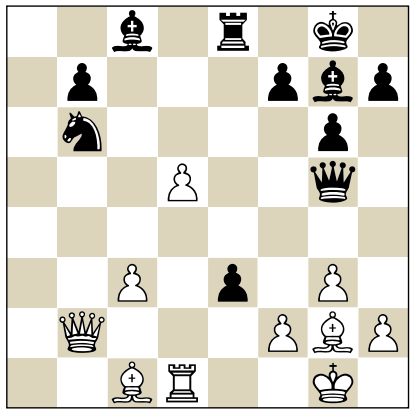
20.♘g5?

Also played instantly. It seems as if Magnus was trying to use some psychology, but the moves he was making were just too bad. It's remarkable that such a top player can have such a bad day. Magnus missed the following idea, which under normal circumstances would be apparent to him at one glance. I would even say at half of a glance.

20...e3!

I saw the move instantly, but enjoyed the moment for a few minutes... White is obviously completely lost here.

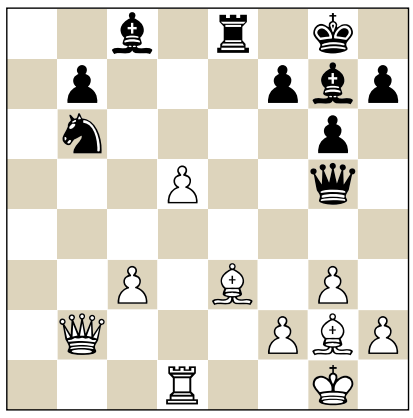
21.♕b2 ♕xg5!



The position was winning in more than one way, but I liked the following long line with a beautiful finish.

22.♗xe3

22.♕xb6 e2 23.♖e1 ♕xc1! 24.♖xc1 e1♕+ 25.♖xe1 ♖xe1+ 26.♗f1 ♗h3! is a pretty end!



22...♕g4!

The last touch. The rook is attacked and after 23.f3 Black can play 23...♘c4 or 23...♘a4.

White resigned.

It was a great and unexpected experience. A lot of players, also from the B and C groups, were surprised, and before I escaped the playing area I did shake quite a few hands. I must say that after I left the playing area the amount of hands I had to shake only grew. I was obviously very happy with this game, but also very much with the fact that I managed to follow it up with a good tournament.

NOTES BY
Anish Giri

SL 6.8 – D43
Vishy Anand
Anish Giri
Wijk aan Zee 2011 (12)

In the 12th and penultimate round of the Tata Steel Chess Tournament I met the current World Champion, Mr. Tata Steel Chess, as he was called at the opening ceremony, Vishy Anand himself. Before this game I was on a comfortable 50 per cent and I was rather happy with my overall result and play. The tournament seemed to be coming to an end, but the thought 'Ah, wait, there's Vishy in Round 12' still kept me very fresh. And so there I was, back in Wijk aan Zee, opposite yet another 'Big Guy', wait... 'Huge Guy', and, once again with black...

1.d4 d5

Previously in the tournament I had used the Grünfeld against both Carlsen and Kramnik, and Vishy presumably expected pretty much the same. However, I was well enough prepared to indulge in some flexibility...

2.c4 c6 3.♘f3 ♘f6 4.♘c3 e6

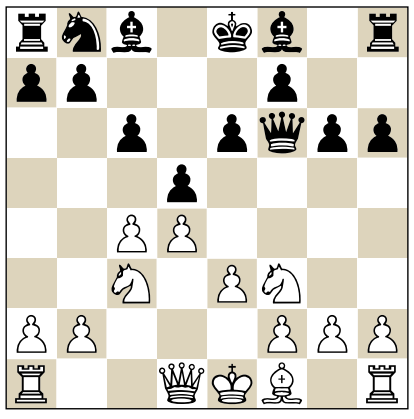
It is pretty remarkable that Anand had inspired all us 'little theoreticians' to turn our attention to the Semi-Slav (remember Mexico 2007, Bonn...) and now I was playing it against Vishy himself. But it's cruel, modern chess...

5.♗g5 h6 6.♗xf6

It wasn't a big surprise that Anand decided to play a quieter line, considering that the Moscow wasn't the main thing he had prepared against. However, it didn't stop me from burning half of my morning rehashing the entire Anti-Moscow. But I can tell you it's a pleasant thing to do after breakfast, to just sit there and stare at your huge files with a big smile on your face and enjoying the grin of your coach next to you, who knows that it's not him who will have to play all these lines...

6.♗h4 is what I am talking about.

6...♕xf6 7.e3 g6!?



This new line is slowly getting more and more popular. I decided to speed up the process... The main move is clearly 7...♘d7, sort of keeping the bishop more flexible. One of the big experts, Boris Gelfand, used this flexibility in his last two games in this line and his bishop ended up on d6.

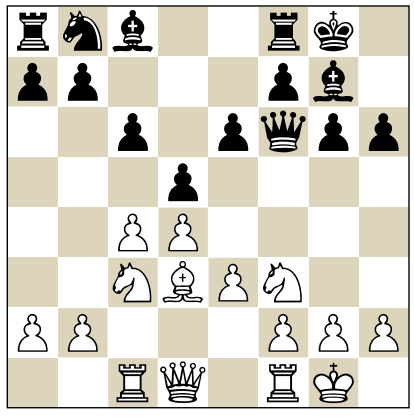
8.♗d3

8.e4!? is one of the paradoxical ways to try and exploit the early move ...g6: 8...dxe4 9.♘xe4 ♗b4+ 10.♔e2 ♕f4 11.♕d3 was played in a blitz game between Kramnik and Leko. Kramnik eventually won that encounter, but for some reason his approach hasn't found any followers.

8...♗g7 9.0-0 0-0 10.♖c1!?

With this move White wants to transpose to one of the lines arising from 7...♘d7. These situations are always double-edged. On the one hand you admit your failure, on the other hand, if the line is better for White, then why not?

10.e4 is an independent try and the most logical one, but Black has good results after 10...dxe4 11.♘xe4 ♕d8, and here the absence of the knight on d7 is playing a positive role. The guy on d4 is hanging.



10...dxc4!?

The first novelty. Funny, but I managed to play two reasonable novelties in one game...

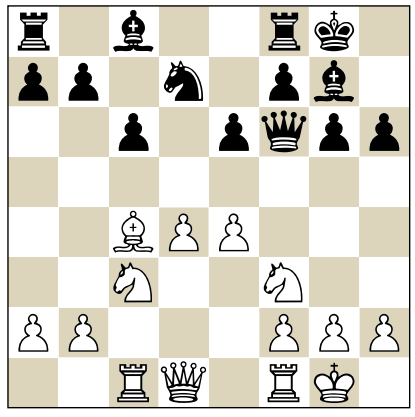
In fact, the main and most logical move 10...♘d7 is probably quite alright as well, but I wanted to avoid the possibility of 11.cxd5 just in case.

11.♗xc4 ♘d7

Now we are back in a huge main line with hundreds of games. But just for one move...

12.e4

At first when checking the line I also thought it was very promising for White. It all ended when my coach Vladimir Chuchelov asked me one question:



'Why not c5?' I failed to answer the question and stored the move with a ! sign in my file.

12...c5! 13.d5

13.e5 looks ambitious, but only works against White: 13...♕d8!?, the main point being 14.♖e1 cxd4 15.♕xd4? ♘xe5!.

13...♘b6 14.b3

Vishy reacted very solidly. And I expected that after a few minutes we would both go back home with yet another half point. I was a few hours wrong.

14...exd5 15.♘xd5 ♕d8

Here I did not have much to do, so I was trying to remember what exactly was in my analysis... I convinced myself that it said ♘xb6 ♕xb6 ♗d5 ♗e6=, and continued making my

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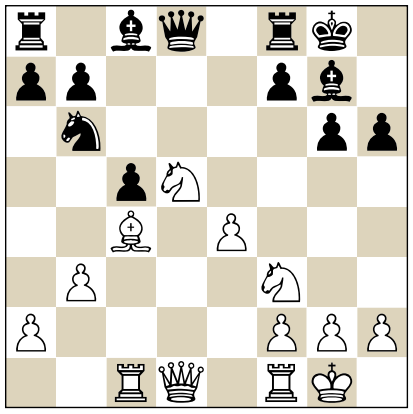
usual big walk through the games of the A-group, the B-group, the C-group, and then I'd have a drink and start all over again. The usual ceremony, which happens more often when you are well prepared.



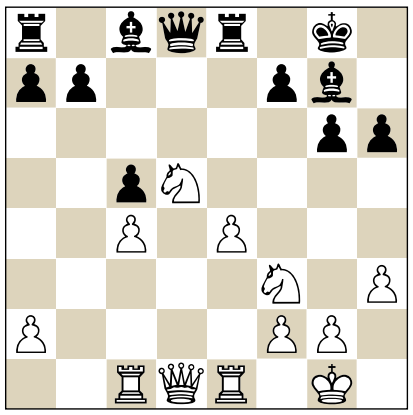
16.h3

This move was in fact the one that was in my analysis, and now ...♗e6 was the move and the line is basically the same. But for some reason I was convinced that ...♘xc4 was the next move and it had a reason, so I rather quickly and confidently grabbed the bishop.

16...♘xc4!?

16...♗e6 is indeed dead equal: 17.♘xb6 (17.♘f4 bothered me a bit over the board, but in fact after 17...♗xc4 18.bxc4 ♕xd1 19.♖fxd1 there is nothing Black can complain about at all) 17...♕xb6 18.♗xe6 ♕xe6 19.♖xc5 ♕xe4, and it's time to go home happy.

17.bxc4 ♖e8 18.♖e1



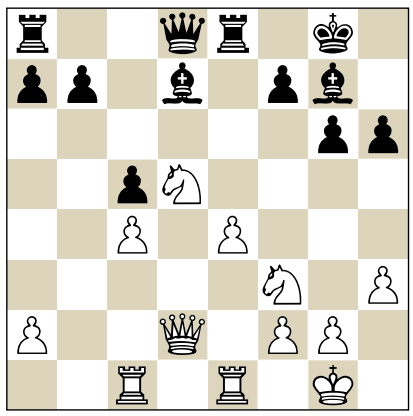
18...♗d7

Somehow I was pretty optimistic about my chances here. My logic was that once I got in ...b5, I would have a strategically better position.

18...♕a5 would avoid her majesty getting to d2, but then I didn't like another trajectory: 19.♕b3 ♖b8 20.♕e3.

19.♕d2

Just after I had made my previous move, I realized that this manoeuvre with the queen could be a bit dangerous, but I quickly found the following sequence and could happily continue my walk.



19...♖c8 Preparing ...b5.

20.♕f4

20.e5 was another possibility, but the position after 20...b5 21.♖cd1 bxc4 22.♕f4 ♖c6! 23.♕xc4 ♕c8 seems totally fine to me. Compared to the game White has his queen on a good square, but the fact that I didn't have to play ...g5 is not to be underestimated.

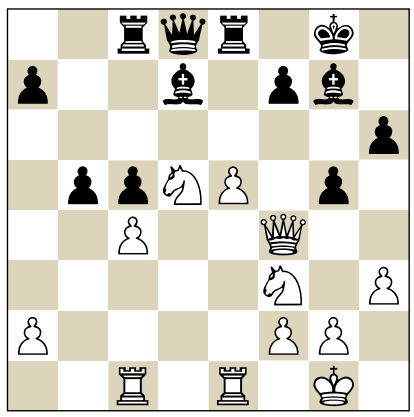
20...b5

I felt very good, especially because all the moves were playing themselves. At some point I started wondering what if at the end of this sequence it turned out I miscalculated something... But I was in a very confident and optimistic mood that day, so the thought quickly died.

20...g5!? is interesting, but somehow I intuitively liked this move more on the next move. My friend here, who has no intuition, but a lot of RAM, is of a different opinion.

21.e5 g5!

If not for this key move that I had counted on, Black would be in trouble. Now I distract White a lot from his plan, though of course ...g5 weakens my king a little.



22.♕g3?!

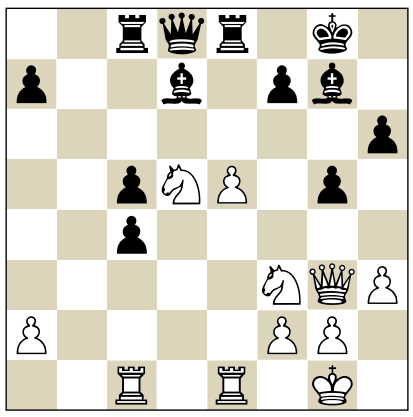
This was the main move I considered over the board and so apparently did Vishy, but in fact the queen seems to

NEW IN CHESS

Facing the World Champion. 'I felt very good, especially because all the moves were playing themselves.'

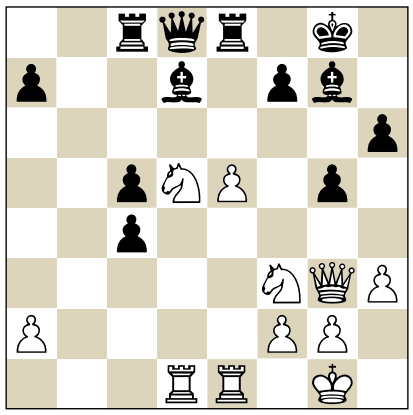
be out of place there and White's attack starts just too late!
After the other two queen moves White would have run much less risk and perhaps I would have lost some of my optimism... but well, there was too much of it anyway.
22.♕e4!? was suggested to me after the game, but the other queen move, 22...♕e3, might even be more dangerous.

22...bxc4



23.♖ed1

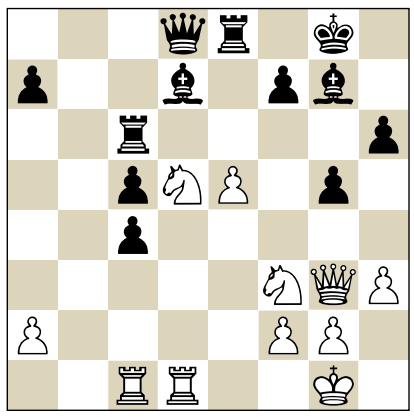
Somehow I was mainly considering the other rook appearing on this square. In fact both are pretty harmless.
23.♖cd1!? may in fact be more dangerous. I can't remember what was my conclusion here exactly, but I remember I saw a few possibilities:



ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

A) 23...♔h8!? is interesting, getting ready for h4: 24.h4 g4 25.♘h2 ♗a4! 26.♘xg4 ♗xd1 27.♖xd1, and it's balanced, though optically one wouldn't say so;
B) 23...♖c6, however, is bad here due to 24.♘d2, and the e5 pawn is protected compared to the game. Having said that, if you keep on playing strongly you will easily survive even here: 24...c3! 25.♕xc3 c4 and try to beat my engine(!);
C) The paradoxical 23...♔f8!? also appealed to me. It feels even more solid than ...♔h8: 24.h4! g4 25.♘h2! ♖c6!? and again it's balanced... But well, with modern equipment it's either mate in 53 or balanced.

23...♖c6!

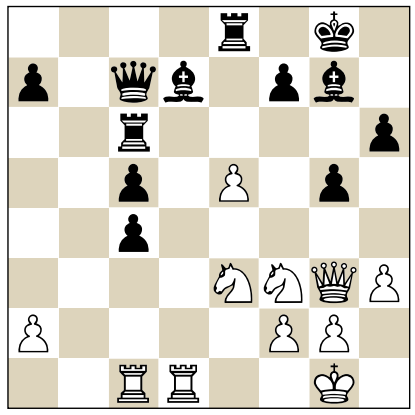


24.♘e3

24.♘f6+ won't yield White anything: 24...♗xf6 25.exf6 ♕c7! 26.♘xg5 (26.♖xd7 would be beautiful, but fortunately I had seen it: 26...♕xd7 27.♘xg5 ♕d3 – 27...♕d6 –, and White will be unable to find either mate or his lost exchange) 26...♕xg3 27.fxg3, and here I thought it was a draw after I took the knight, but obviously I have 27...♗f5, giving me maybe even a slight plus.
24.♖xc4 is too primitive and would be met by 24...♕b8.

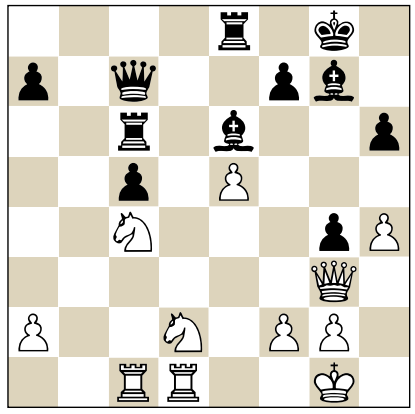
24...♕c7

I didn't really understand what Vishy was planning, so I decided to wait and see. But he didn't show me... ☹



25.♘xc4

25.♘d5!? ♕b8 26.♘e3 was more tricky; but Black can also be tricky: 26...♗c8! (26...♗e6 27.h4!) 27.♘xc4 (27.h4 g4!) 27...♗e6!, and it looks like the game continuation.
25.h4 was probably best, the point is that after 25...g4! White has 26.♘d5!, when things should be balanced.
25...♗e6 Now it was already apparent that I had taken over the initiative.
26.h4 If 26.♖e1 then 26...♖d8!.
26...g4 27.♘fd2



27...♖d8!

Somehow I also seriously considered the crazy and greedy 27...f6. It was just hard to get used to the fact that

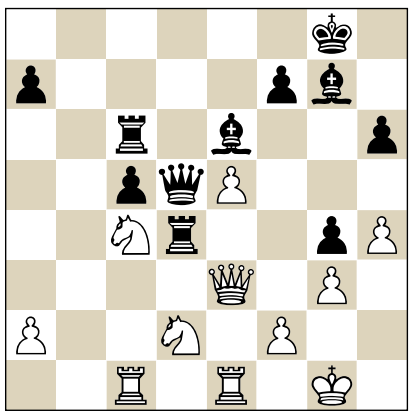
I was clearly better against the World Champion...

28.♖e1 ♖d4 29.♕e3 ♕d8!

The moves are just playing themselves. It was a pleasure sitting there and being the one who was supposed to execute them.

30.g3 ♕d5

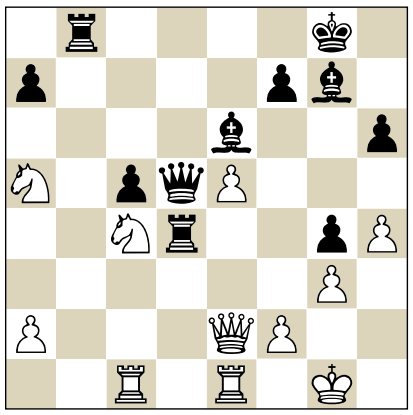
If I had gone 30...♖a6!, they would have accused me of cheating: 31.a3 ♕d5, and now the rook gets to a4, exactly what I had planned, but the ♘a5 idea has been stopped. White is really in trouble here.



31.♘a5!

An extremely strong defensive resource, which I had underestimated.

31...♖c8 32.♘dc4 ♖b8 33.♕e2



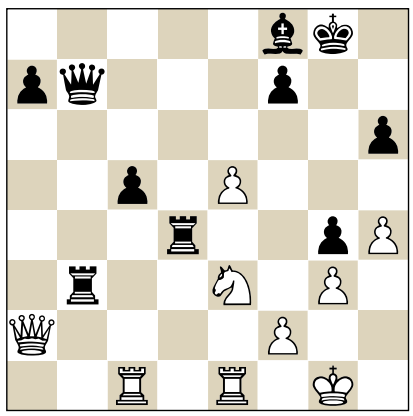
33...♗f8!

Somehow I couldn't believe that White could suddenly equalize in such a position. This disbelief inspired me to find this only move to keep the edge.

34.♘e3 ♕e4 35.♘b3!

An interesting defensive idea. I wasn't too upset, though, because now I had at least an extra pawn. And there in Wijk aan Zee it's not everyday you get those free extras...

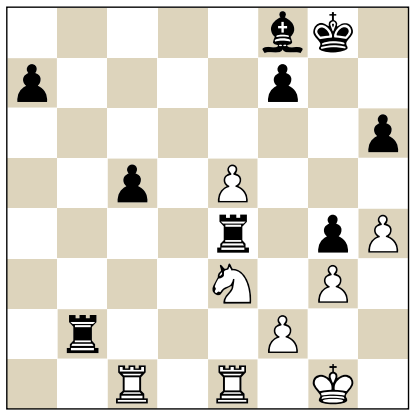
35...♗xb3 36.axb3 ♖xb3 37.♕a2 ♕b7



38.♕c2

The surprising 38.e6!? fxe6 39.♕c2! was an interesting and unnoticed possibility. White has surprisingly good drawing chances here.

38...♖b2 39.♕f5 ♕e4 40.♕xe4 ♖xe4



Before the time-control I overestimated my position and somehow thought that I was quite close to winning. I can't explain why, but this endgame seems to be very close to a draw.

41.♖a1?

Anand called this a blunder. And indeed it was, but during the game I thought it was a reasonable move.

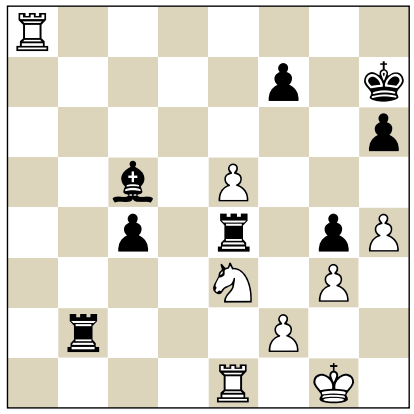
Correct was 41.♖ed1! ♖b8! (to prevent the white rook entering the house) 42.♘d5!, and White seems to be escaping, due to a lot of tactical nuances in the position and a dirty knight.

41...c4!

To be honest, while thinking for some 30 minutes here, I came to the conclusion that the position was most likely a draw. This move seemed the best practical try to me. Apparently, it's also the strongest one.

41...♗g7 also entered my mind, when I was trying to find some genius move. After I realized that the genius of the move is mostly its appearance, I went for ...c4.

42.♖xa7 ♗c5 43.♖a8+ ♔h7

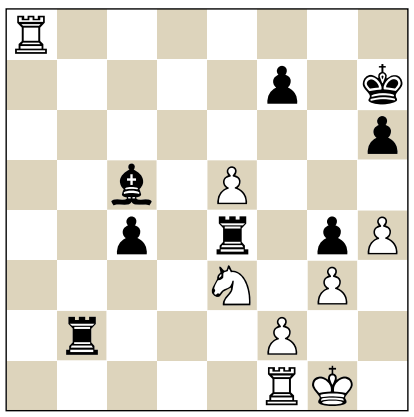


44.♖f1!

This was the reason why I hesitated before playing ...c4. I didn't see how to proceed here, but when I got to the position I got my optimism back again.

44.♖a4 was another option. It seems to be stronger in fact! As far as I believe I intended to play 44...♗xe3

45.fxe3, and now not 45...♖b7!, but 45...♔g7, and here I missed 46.♖a7!. After 45...♖b7! 46.♔g2 Black keeps good chances, but so does White: after 46...♔g6 47.♖e2 ♖c7 the e-pawn will be lost, but the game will not be over. And if so, it would most likely be a draw.



44...c3

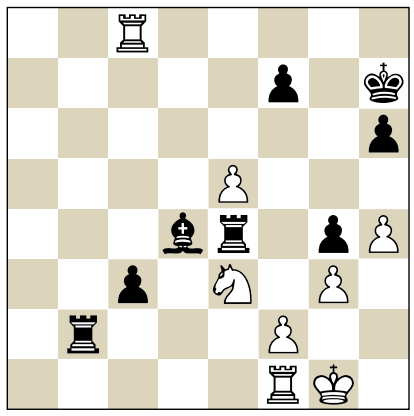
44...♔g7!? was my initial idea. It wasn't bad, but it seems that the game move is winning. After 45.♘f5+ ♔g6 46.♘e3 I wasn't sure whether my king's position had actually improved. 45.♖c8! is the tough move I missed: 45...♗xe3 46.fxe3 ♖xe3 47.♖xc4 ♖xg3+ 48.♔h1, and strangely enough it's most likely to end in a draw.

44...♗xe3 45.fxe3 ♖b7 wasn't considered. Somehow it wasn't the day to consider putting my rook in reverse; it just wasn't that day...

45.♖c8

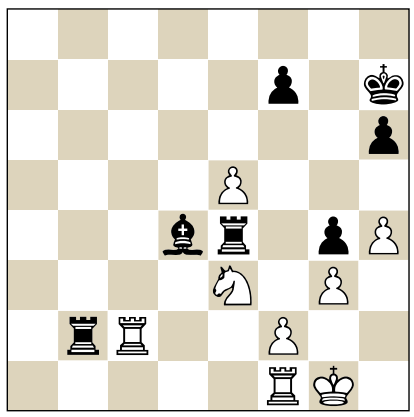
45.♘d5 ♗xf2+! is the key trick here: 46.♖xf2 ♖e1+ 47.♔g2 ♖xf2+ 48.♔xf2 c2.

45...♗d4



46.♖c7

46.♖c4!? was the move I had expected. I got extremely excited about the extraordinary idea 46...c2!? and I just assumed that there was a win after 47.♖c7!!, but surprisingly enough, there wasn't, because 47.♖xc2



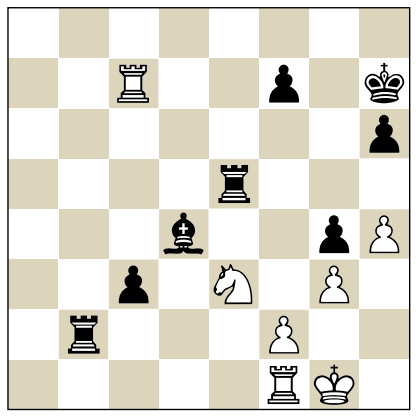
ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

47...♖xe3!! 48.♖xb2 – 48.fxe3 ♗xe3+ – 48...♖xg3+! 49.♔h2 ♖h3+! is the beautiful point.

However, after 46.♖c4 the best continuation is most likely 46...h5!, but White has some chances: 47.♔h1! ♖d2 48.♘d5 ♖xe5 49.♘xc3 ♖xf2 50.♖xf2 ♗xf2 51.♔g2 ♗e1, and it's not clear to me how it's going to end, but I would bet I was not going to lose.

46...♖xe5

To be honest, at this point I was thinking that White should have a draw in the resulting rook ending. Ah, if somebody only had told me I was wrong...



47.♖xf7+

This was played instantly and is also obvious. But objectively it seems to be losing.

47.♘xg4! was suggested as a saving resource, which could very much be the case, but it's hard to say: after 47...

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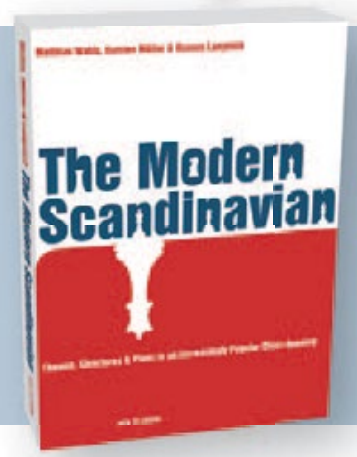

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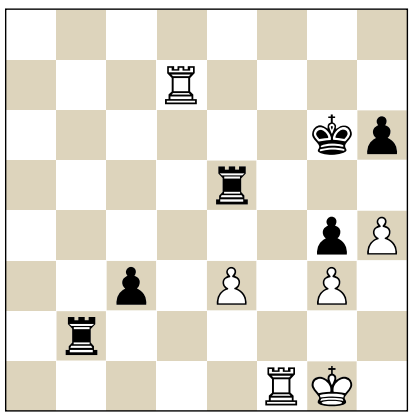
♖f5 (47...♖ee2 48.h5! is a pretty point, White is likely to hold after 48...♔g7 49.♔g2 ♖bd2 50.♔f3 c2 51.♘e3 ♔f6 52.♖c8) the following sequence is forced: 48.♖c4 ♖d2 49.♖c1! ♗g7 (49...h5 50.♘e3!) 50.f4 (50.♖f1 h5 51.♘e3) 50...♗d4+ 51.♖xd4 ♖xd4 52.♖xc3 ♖d2 53.♘e5 ♖f6 54.♖f3, and White has to exchange one rook. The resulting endgame is not so clear to me. White has good saving chances after transferring the knight to e3. Although I am maybe missing a win.

47...♔g6 48.♖d7!

48.♖f4 was what I was calculating as the only move and it seemed drawn to me, but from this distance I missed an easy trick: 48...♗xe3 49.fxe3 ♖c5! 50.♖xg4+ ♔h5!, winning.

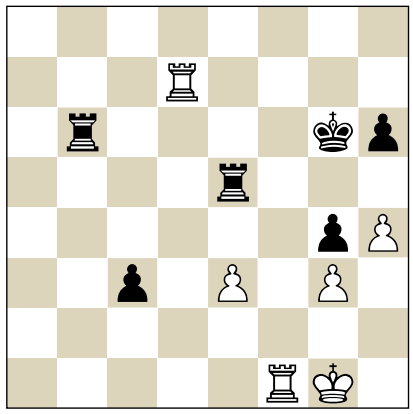
48...♗xe3 49.fxe3



49...♖d2??

This move was born not because I thought it was winning or anything, but just due to the fact that somehow it seemed to me that the game was already over and it was just a draw. At this point I had little time and Anand's good defending kind of hypnotized me. The winning move is easy to explain even to an amateur and I would probably have found it instantly, simply using the elimination method, but first of all there was nobody screaming from the playing hall that I had a win (next time I should hire someone for that... against Grischuk I also spoiled a win for the same reason) and secondly, the way the mind works after some six hours of play is pretty different.

49...♖b6! would most probably win. There is a fortress that computers don't understand and which was pointed out by Vishy instantly after the game. If White has a rook on f2 and on c1 and Black has a pawn on c2 and both rooks on the c-file and his king is cut off on the f-file, White draws. However it seems impossible for White to achieve this. Here are some key lines:



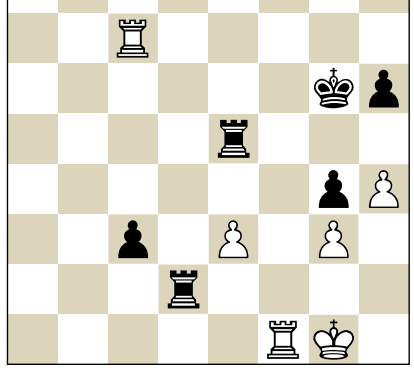
ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

50.♔g2 ♖xe3 51.♖f2 ♖c6 52.♖d1 h5 (52...c2?? 53.♖c1 ♖ec3) 53.♖df1 (53.♖c1 ♖f6) 53...♖d6 – White always manages to exchange a rook here or grab the f-file.

50.e4 ♖xe4 51.♖c7 (51.♖d5 ♖f6!) 51...♖e3 52.♖f4!? h5! (52...♖xg3+ 53.♔f2 ♖d3 54.♖xg4+ ♔h5 55.♖gc4 seems to be drawn) 53.♔f2 ♖d3 54.♖c5 ♖b2+ 55.♔g1 ♖d1+! (55...♖xg3+ 56.♔f1 ♖b6 57.♖g5+ ♔h6 58.♖f8 isn't so clear) 56.♖f1 ♖xf1+ 57.♔xf1 c2 58.♔e1 ♖b1+ 59.♔d2 ♖g1 60.♖xc2 ♖xg3 61.♖c6+ ♔f5 62.♖c5+ ♔f4 63.♖xh5 ♖a3, and Black wins.

In fact, none of these lines is very difficult. I probably just had to find 49...♖b6!... But then again, I didn't.

50.♖c7



Draw. I can't tell you how it feels when you beat a World Champion, but I can tell you that when you press him the whole game it doesn't feel too bad either.

After 50...c2 51.♖c6+ ♔h5 I thought it was a draw anyway, but after I realized that I had missed 52.♖ff6 I decided to offer a draw before it was too late ☺.

Funnily enough, this position is drawn due to the rambling rook(!): 52...♖d1+ 53.♔f2 ♖d2+ 54.♔e1 c1♕+ 55.♖xc1 ♖xe3+ 56.♔xd2 ♖d3+.

50.♖xd2 is also drawing, by the way: 50...cxd2 51.♖d1 ♖xe3 52.♖xd2! ♖xg3+ 53.♔f2 ♖f3+ 54.♔g2, and there seems to be no way to win. ■

Wijk aan Zee A 2011 — **cat. XX**

			1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14		TPR
1	Hikaru Nakamura	IGM USA 2751	*	½	0	½	½	1	½	½	1	½	1	1	1	1	9	2880
2	Vishy Anand	IGM IND 2810	½	*	½	½	½	½	½	1	½	1	½	½	1	1	8½	2844
3	Magnus Carlsen	IGM NOR 2814	1	½	*	½	1	½	0	½	0	1	½	1	1	½	8	2821
4	Levon Aronian	IGM ARM 2805	½	½	½	*	½	½	½	½	1	½	1	½	½	1	8	2822
5	Vladimir Kramnik	IGM RUS 2784	½	½	0	½	*	½	1	½	½	½	½	1	½	1	7½	2793
6	Maxime Vachier-Lagrave	IGM FRA 2715	0	½	½	½	½	*	½	½	1	½	½	½	1	1	7½	2799
7	Anish Giri	IGM NED 2686	½	½	1	½	0	½	*	½	0	1	½	½	½	½	6½	2744
8	Ruslan Ponomariov	IGM UKR 2744	½	0	½	½	½	½	½	*	½	0	1	½	1	½	6½	2740
9	Ian Nepomniachtchi	IGM RUS 2733	0	½	1	0	½	0	1	½	*	1	½	½	0	½	6	2711
10	Wang Hao	IGM CHN 2731	½	0	0	½	½	½	0	1	0	*	1	1	½	½	6	2712
11	Alexander Grischuk	IGM RUS 2773	0	½	½	0	½	½	½	0	½	0	*	½	1	0	4½	2627
12	Erwin l'Ami	IGM NED 2628	0	½	0	½	0	½	½	½	½	0	½	*	½	½	4½	2638
13	Jan Smeets	IGM NED 2662	0	0	0	½	½	0	½	0	1	½	0	½	*	1	4½	2636
14	Alexey Shirov	IGM ESP 2722	0	0	½	0	0	0	½	½	½	½	1	½	0	*	4	2600

One lost his woolly hat, quite an essential garment in windy Wijk aan Zee, the other lost his lucky pen, but apparently nothing could stop them from winning the right to play in next year's top group. After a gripping race **Luke McShane** and **David Navara** finished shared first in the **Tata Steel** B-Group, an almost humoristic name for a category-17 top tournament that boasted four 2700+ GMs. The English grandmaster, who wholeheartedly continues to enjoy a remarkable comeback, was declared the winner and accepted our invitation to look back on one of the finest results in his career.

A Splendid Side-Show

Luke McShane

(top) After a tense game Luke McShane and Wesley So enjoy a relaxed post-mortem.
(right) At the prize-giving both Luke McShane and David Navara were invited to next year's top group.

For many years I've enjoyed watching the wonderful output of creative chess played in Wijk aan Zee. Following online, it's always clear that the organizers have found lots of interesting players to invite, in each of the A, B and C groups. That much is clear from afar, but this year I had a chance to see things 'on the ground'.

Entering the playing hall for the first time, the long history of the Wijk aan Zee tournament (this was the 73rd edition) makes an immediate impression, as the walls are covered with portraits of great players who have made their mark in this village. The re-branding of the tournament as the Tata Steel event (rather than Corus) manifested itself in a soothing blue backdrop to the games in the main playing hall. That colour scheme made the poster of a man seated at a chessboard in the middle of the sea look surprisingly natural, so the first thing I paid attention to (as a typical chess player would) was the position on the board. Since this was a picture of a physical chessboard, it wasn't instantly recognizable, and looked rather like one of those manic jumbles of pieces that photographers who don't play chess are fond of creating. It wasn't until the next day that I realised that this was actually the position after the winning move 37.♖d7! from Kasparov-Topalov, Wijk aan Zee 1999, one of the most thrilling attacking games ever played. An inspiring little detail...

Chess players are notorious for losing track of what day it is while at a chess tournament, but most have a pretty good idea when their next game is coming up. On the day I arrived in Wijk aan Zee I was mentally convinced that I would be playing the next day, despite feeling tired from travel and under-prepared for my opponents. After talking to a few people, it soon dawned on me that there was a whole extra day for drawing of lots and relaxing. My careless miscalculation suddenly felt like quite a good omen – everything was going to be alright! As it turned out, I had a dream start to the tournament, beginning with three good wins and moving on to 5/6.

Normally, one would have buckets of confidence at that stage, but I felt strangely nervous before my game against Le Quang Liem. That might be because his demolition of the field at last year's Aeroflot Open made a strong impression on me, augmented by a fine performance at Dortmund a few months later. Another explanation is the weather. I had formed the habit of taking a walk along the beach, and that morning I couldn't help noticing that the wind had flipped direction since the first day. To add insult to injury, I lost my woolly hat in the evening. In windy Wijk aan Zee, that's like a black cat chasing you under a ladder on Friday the 13th.

By the next day Wesley So had taken over the lead, with a blistering series of four consecutive wins and, it seemed to me, in excellent style too. At this stage it was dawning on me that the length of the tournament in Wijk aan Zee really adds an extra dimension. Thirteen rounds is a very

JANIS NISII

NEW IN CHESS

Mark Bluvshtein and arbiter Alex Roose avert their eyes as Luke McShane and Jon Ludvig Hammer embark on a game that they will both prefer to forget.

NEW IN CHESS

Zahar Efimenko was arguably the most consistent player, but it was not enough.

long time indeed (at least for us lightweights of the modern era). Of course, everyone gets tired, but most important are the ebbs and flows of confidence which feel so intangible but can make all the difference among closely matched opponents.

Perhaps the second rest day interrupted Wesley's form, as he lost in Round 9. Meanwhile I lost my marbles, drawing a terribly scrappy game against Jon Ludvig Hammer, which I'm sure we'd both prefer to forget although it did allow me to catch up with So, as did Gabriel Sargissian, who was one of the few undefeated players at that point.

I have to mention the Dutch player Wouter Spoelman, who had a tough time as the bottom seed – a particularly difficult task in a long all-play-all, where the opponents never get easier. By Round 9 he had just lost five in a row, but showed enormous character to win three from the last four, with a decent performance overall.

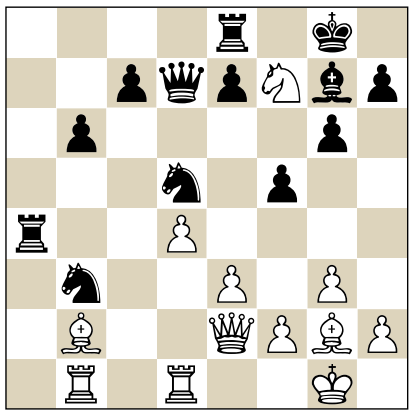
My Bundesliga team-mate Zahar Efimenko was never far off the lead in Wijk aan Zee, and arguably the most consistent player overall. (In fact, had he beaten Sargissian in the final round, he would have had the best tie-break and won the whole thing.) Facing Zahar with the white pieces in Round 10, it felt like a crucial chance to recover some momentum, but I became rather too keen to win and ended up getting mated. Given my miserable mood that evening, it's rather a mystery to me that I managed to finish with 2½/3 and share first place with David Navara. David was one of the top seeds and always plays entertaining, fighting chess, but I'm sure he was disappointed to be stuck on 50% after eight rounds. Some setbacks can be dispiriting, but at other times they help you forget your ambitions and focus solely on the next game, and that might have inspired his 4/4 streak. That was rather intimidating when I had to play him in the final round, and David has annotated our interesting game below. Nevertheless, my confidence was back intact, as I had beaten Wesley So in murky sacrificial style the day before – annotated below, and the first game where I really felt that luck had smiled on me.

In the end I defended successfully against Navara, and we shared first place. I'm not a great believer in tie-breaks in all-play-alls, so I was delighted when we both received an invitation for the A-group next year. I will have to get a new hat!

NOTES BY
Luke McShane

CK 4.15 – B12
Luke McShane
Wesley So
Wijk aan Zee 2011 (12)

During my preparation the night before, I was browsing through some of my opponent's games. The following beautiful tactic gave me such a feeling of ecstasy, that I cannot resist sharing it. I hope he will forgive me for including it here.



Harikrishna-So
Guangzhou Asian Games 2010

22.♘d6!! A really extraordinary idea. Every single one of Black's pieces on a light square plays a part in making this tactic work. **22...♕xd6 23.♕b5** Attacking, well, everything! Black tried **23...♖d8 24.♕xa4 ♘a5** but had to resign a few moves later.

Meanwhile, back in Wijk aan Zee…

1.e4 c6

I knew that Wesley had played this

before, but I couldn't really expect it. Lately, I have had a few games with 2.♘f3 and 3.♘c3, which he must have anticipated. On the spur of the moment, I decided to try the 4.h4 line in the Advance Variation, which has enjoyed a little popularity recently.

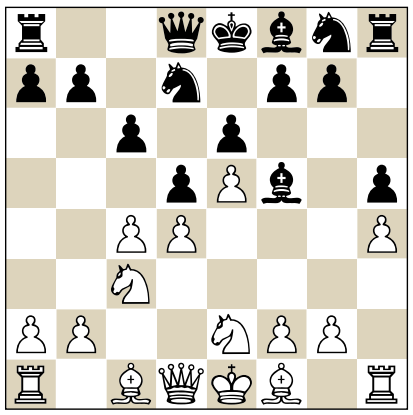
2.d4 d5 3.e5 ♗f5 4.h4 h5

One of the main points of 4.h4!? is to threaten g2-g4, followed by trapping the bishop on the b1/h7 diagonal. This move secures the bishop, but White hopes that the weakened squares in Black's kingside (g5 and g6 in particular) will play an important role.

5.c4 e6 6.♘c3 ♘d7 7.♘ge2

Not a bad move, but certainly a mix-up!

In this position 7.cxd5 cxd5 followed by 8.♗d3 or 8.♗g5 is much more common. In the game Nepomniachtchi-Nakamura from the day before, Nakamura played 6...♘e7 instead of 6...♘d7, and in that position 7.♘ge2 makes more sense.



7...dxc4

Well, at least I saw he could take the pawn. Before playing 7.♘ge2 I even calculated the line 8.♘g3 ♗d3 9.♗xd3 cxd3 10.♗g5 (not 10.♕xd3? ♘xe5!) 10...♗e7 11.♘ge4. Totally irrelevant calculation is often a bad sign, and it simply escaped my attention that Black could defend the pawn with 8...♘b6. White has reasonable compensation, but it's a bit unsettling to sacrifice material by accident.

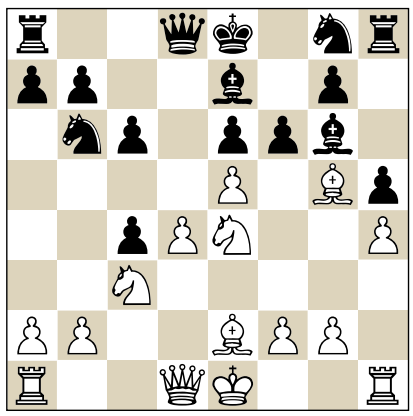
8.♘g3 ♘b6 9.♗e2

9.♘xf5 exf5 10.♗e2 g6 11.♗f3 was another way to play, but I wasn't thrilled.

9...♗g6 10.♗g5

In general, I felt that capturing on h5 would discoordinate my pieces, but leaving the pawn there was a useful deterrent against castling kingside.

10...♗e7 11.♘ge4 f6



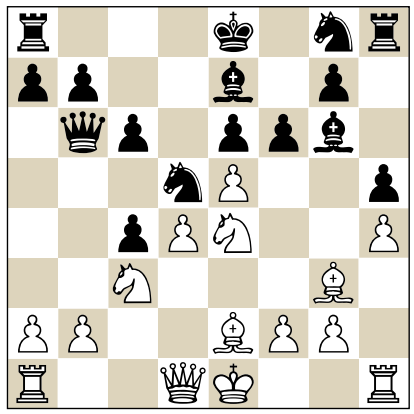
12.♗f4?

12.exf6 gxf6 13.♗e3 is a better option, which we discussed after the game. I underestimated White's compensation here. There is a plan to play a2-a4 to provoke a7-a5, and then open up the game with b2-b3.

12...♘d5 13.♗g3 ♕b6

Another surprise for me, though the move is quite natural and Black is already doing well.

The option getting all my attention was 13...♗xe4 14.♘xe4 f5 which tries to leave the ♗g3 passive, and indeed this was not bad either. Curiously, capturing on h5 with check still just discoordinates White's own pieces.

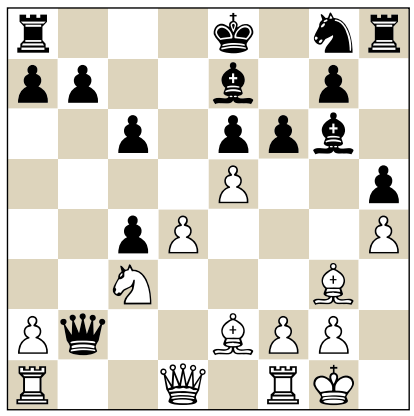


14.0-0!?

Strangely, I rejected the obvious move 14.♕d2 for no good reason. I decided that the best way to handle this dubious position was to sacrifice a piece, put on my Tal-branded crash helmet and cross my fingers.

14...♘xc3 15.♘xc3 ♕xb2

Black exchanges knights first so that 16.♘a4 can be met with 16...♕c2!.



16.♗xc4?!

The improvised nature of the opening from both sides meant we were consuming lots of time on each move.

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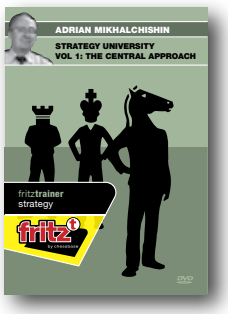

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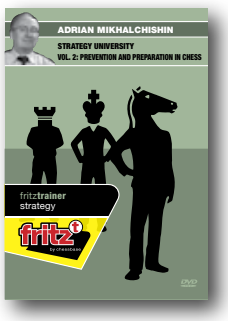

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And yet, I still failed to see the playable alternatives.

16.♖c1 ♗a3 17.♕a4 ♕b4 really was bad for White.

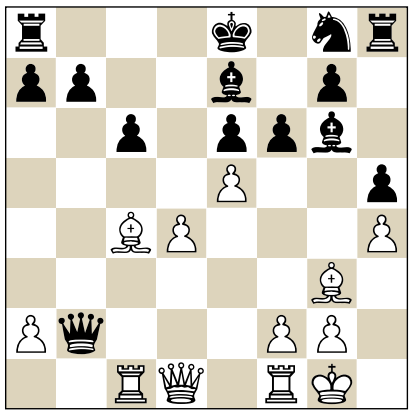
However, 16.♕e1 was pretty interesting. 16...♗b4 17.♖c1 ♗c2 seemed like a refutation, but as Wesley showed me afterwards, White gets a huge mating attack with 18.exf6! ♗xc3? (18...♘xf6 19.♗xc4!) 19.♗xh5+! ♔d7 20.♕e5.

16...♕xc3 17.♖c1 ♕b2

Actually, 17...♕a3 is what I expected, but the queen on b2 prepares useful counterplay against d4.

Let me quote a splendid piece of advice which I came across while reading Krasenkow's ChessBase annotations: 'There is a little-known positional rule discovered by Znosko-Borovsky, a Russian master of the first half of the last century: when you have a material advantage but your opponent is ahead in development, don't remove your advanced pieces, even if they don't look safe. They must prevent your opponent's manoeuvring.'

That helps to explain why 17...♕a5 is worse, and before sacrificing the piece I felt encouraged by one sample line: 18.♗xe6 ♗f7 19.♗xf7+ ♔xf7 20.♕b3+ ♕d5 21.♕xb7 ♘h6 22.e6+!, and Black must abandon the bishop on e7 to keep the e-file closed.



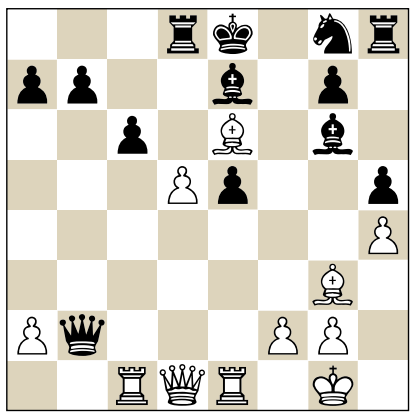
18.♗xe6

White is still a whole piece down, but although I was sceptical of the sacrifice's objective merits, I didn't feel burdened by them – in fact I was more cheerful than I had been since move seven! Nevertheless my optimism was tempered when I recalled my opponent's successful defence against Ivanchuk's sacrifice in their World Cup match in 2009.

18...♖d8 19.d5 fxe5

It is rather pointless to analyse this position with a computer, which much prefers 19...cxd5. That opens the c-file for my rook, allows ♕a4+, and does nothing to develop the kingside. I don't doubt that it is correct nonetheless!

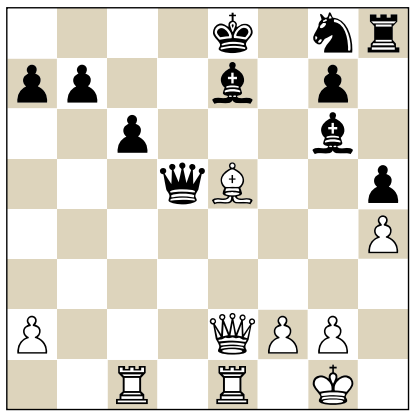
20.♖e1



20...♗f6

In such a wild position, everything you calculate is really just a sample variation. At least by this stage of the game, my brain had woken up and wasn't making the careless errors that I made in the opening.

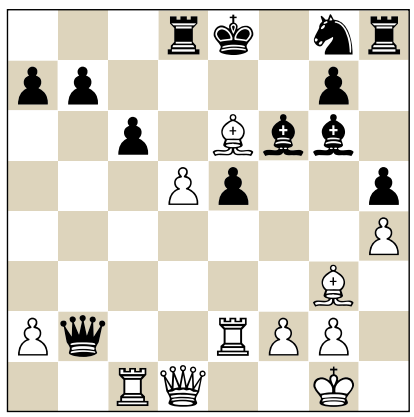
Here's one thing I looked at: 20...♕d4 seemed natural to me, and I intended 21.♕e2, when 21...♖xd5 seemed the most thematic (21...♗d3 22.♕f3! is awkward, threatening mate on f7) 22.♗xd5 ♕xd5 23.♗xe5.



ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

Now I thought Black would need to play 23...♕e6 24.♕b2 ♘f6 and then I calculated 25.♗xf6 ♕xf6 26.♕xb7 0-0! 27.♕xe7 ♕xf2+ 28.♔h1 ♖f4! 29.♖c3! ♖xh4+ 30.♖h3 ♖xh3+ 31.gxh3 ♗f7 to threaten ♗d5+, but White saves the game with 32.♕d8+ ♔h7 33.♕d3+ g6 34.♖e7, with a likely draw. There are several alternatives, but the line is not complete nonsense.

21.♖e2



21...♕a3

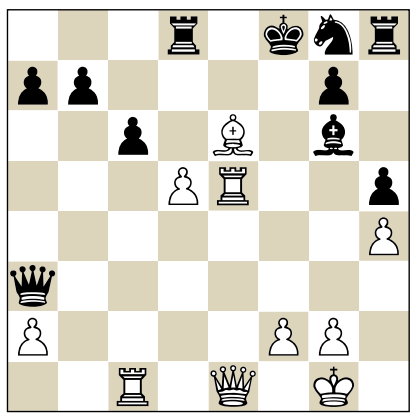
21...♕d4 is still what I expected, and shows an interesting psychological situation. I would probably have gambled on 22.♕e1 here, with the usual murky compensation.

However, Wesley didn't want to return the extra piece so cheaply: 22.♕xd4 exd4 23.♗xg8+ ♔f8 24.♗e6. Here I abandoned the variation, because Black can grab a second pawn in the endgame, but he looked further and saw that, without being fully mobilized, things still aren't that easy for Black: 24...d3 25.♖e3! gives White reasonable play, e.g. 25...♗d4 26.♖f3+ ♔e7 27.♖e1!.

22.♗xe5 ♗xe5 23.♖xe5 ♔f8!

Best, although I was expecting 23...♘e7, when I had prepared 24.♕e1 with dangerous pressure, to be increased by ♖c1-c3-e3.

24.♕e1



24...♕d6?

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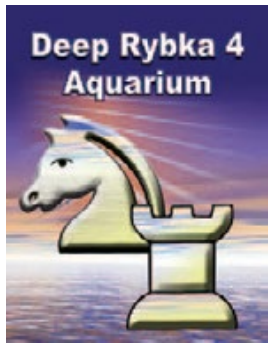

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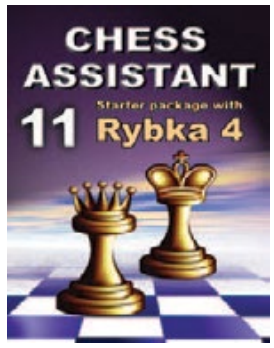

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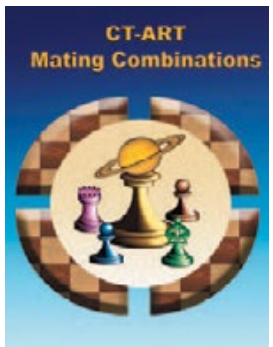

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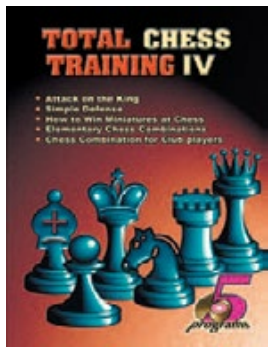

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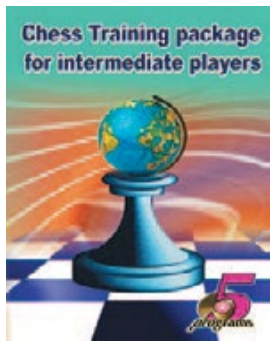

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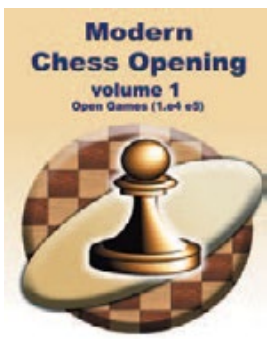

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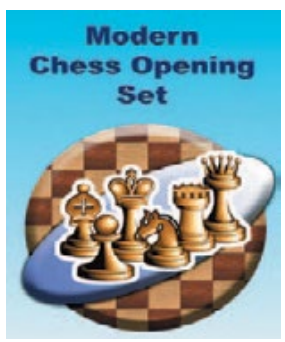

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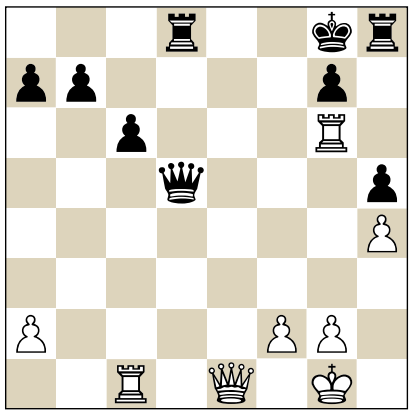
Wijk aan Zee

The last-round pairings could not have been more dramatic. Sharing the lead, Luke McShane and David Navara were pitted against each other. After 57 moves a hard-fought game, in which the Czech grandmaster had the better chances, ended in a draw. As he had the better tie-break, the Englishman was declared the winner of the 2011 Tata Steel B-Group.

Finally a serious error – my gamble initiated ten moves earlier has paid off!

Setting aside the computer's suggestion of 24...♖h6, which never crossed my mind in this position, the plausible 24...♘f6! was much better: after 25.dxc6 bxc6 26.♖xc6 ♗f7 is the obvious way to untangle. White can try 27.♗xf7 ♔xf7 28.♖c7+ but I couldn't see a convincing follow-up after 28...♖d7 29.♖xd7+ ♘xd7. Here White can try 30.♖f5+ ♘f6 31.♖a5 ♕e7 32.♕xe7+ ♔xe7 33.♖xa7+ ♘d7, with chances to draw, but now only one player can win so the pressure is on the defender.

25.♗xg8 ♔xg8 26.♖e6 ♕xd5 27.♖xg6

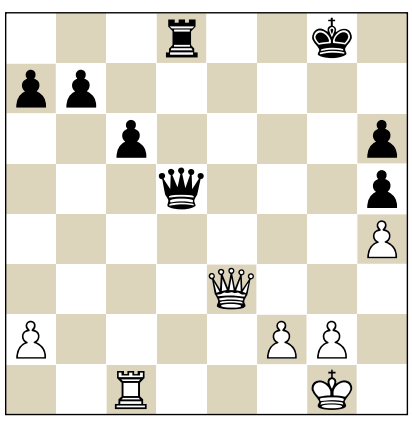


27...♖h6?

That mistakes supposedly come in pairs, is wisdom I have never been able to use, but it has a ring of truth to it. I was delighted to see this move.

It was essential to spot the intermezzo idea 27...♔h7 28.♖g5 ♖he8!.Now 29.♕b4! is better than 29.♕c3, and the position should probably end in a draw.

28.♖xh6 gxh6 29.♕e3



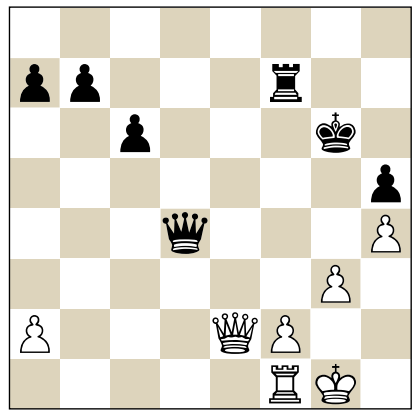
I am stunned that my computer considers this position to be only a fraction better for White, as during the game I had no doubt that, with care, I should win the game now.

This time, I'm confident in my own assessment – Black's king is terribly exposed, and the extra pawns on the queenside are of very little use. Practically speaking, we had just a couple of minutes left plus the 30 second increment, and in those conditions Black's task really is hopeless.

29...♖d7 30.♕xh6 ♖g7 31.g3 ♕d4

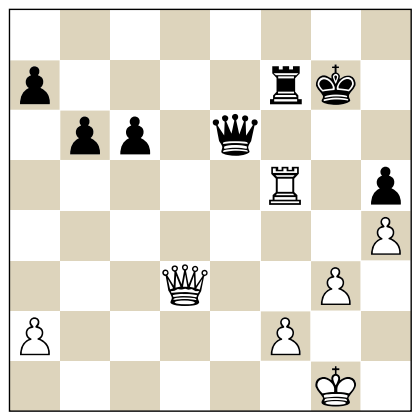
31...♖e7 was a stiffer defence, grabbing the central files, but with 32.♕g6+ ♔f8 33.♕c2 preparing ♖d1, White makes progress very easily.

32.♕e6+ ♖f7 33.♕e2 ♔g7 34.♖f1 ♔g6



35.♖d1! A very pretty detail. With the king on g7, 34.♖d1 failed to 34...♖xf2! 35.♕e7+ ♖f7+!+, turning the tables. But now with the king on g6, 35...♖xf2 allows the check on the diagonal with 36.♕e8+ (not 36.♕e6+??) so White wins the queen.

35...♕f6 36.♕e3 b6 37.♖d4 ♖e7 38.♕d3+ ♔g7 39.♖f4 ♕e6 40.♖f5 ♖f7?!



Having reached the time control, I got a coffee and triple checked the winning line 41.♖g5+ ♔h6 (all others lose by forcing checks) 42.♕d1!. Before I could play this, he resigned.

Wijk aan Zee

NOTES BY
David Navara

KI 72.7 – E62
David Navara
Luke McShane
Wijk aan Zee 2011 (13)

This game was played in the last round. We were both leading, Luke having a significantly better tie-break. Zahar Efimenko was half a point behind. He beat us both, which means that a possible tie would favour him. But he had to beat Gabriel Sargissian, who is a very strong and solid player.

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.g3 ♗g7 4.♗g2 0-0 5.♘f3 d6 6.♘c3 ♘c6 7.0-0 ♖b8 8.e3

I had played this system several times with various time controls. Not all of these games are, however, in the databases. White just strengthens his centre and makes some useful moves. It is not very dangerous from a theoretical point of view, but many King's Indian players feel uncomfortable in the resulting positions.

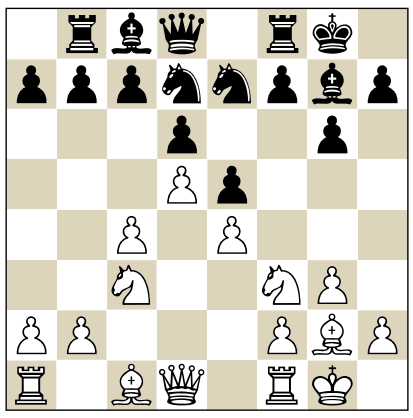
8...e5

8...a6 9.♕e2 e5 looked more logical to me, because the exchange on e5 should not worry Black and 10.d5 ♘e7 11.e4 b5 should be equal if Black continues accurately (which is, however, not always so simple).

9.d5 ♘e7 10.e4

Now the game may resemble the lines starting with 7...e5 8.d5 ♘e7. The spare move ...♖b8 rather helps White, who can gain a tempo playing ♗e3.

10...♘d7

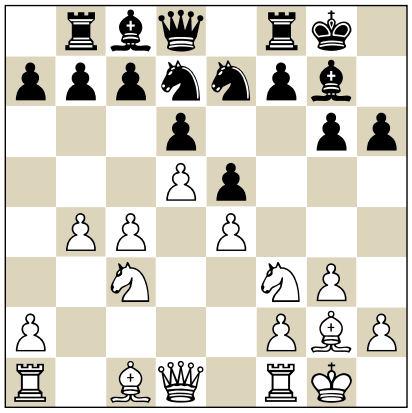


11.b4

I hoped to win another tempo by discouraging Black from the immediate advance ...f7-f5. I also wanted to prevent Black from playing ...c7-c5 in some lines like 11.♘e1 f5 12.♘d3 ♘f6 13.f3 c5!?. White can also try 13.f4, but that is another story.

11...h6

The critical continuation was undoubtedly 11...f5 12.♘g5 ♘f6, after which the position strongly resembles some classical lines of the King's Indian with ♗e2 and 9.b4. I only vaguely remembered them, but thought that the differences should rather favour White. Frankly speaking, while calculating tempi I somehow forgot to take account of my loss of a tempo caused by playing e2-e3-e4. Still, White has many interesting options here. I liked 13.b5 (Luke was afraid of 13.f4 exf4 14.♗xf4, possibly followed by an exchange sacrifice on a1. It is possible to play like this, but after a long and tiring tournament I felt reluctant to analyse this seriously), intending to prepare 14.♘e6. Still, after 13...fxe4 Black would have been fine.



12.♗e3

12.c5 is probably too hasty, as Black can quickly activate his pieces after 12...dxc5 13.bxc5 ♘xc5 14.♗e3 b6 15.♗xc5 bxc5 16.♘a4 ♗a6 17.♖e1 ♕d6, followed by ...c7-c6.

But 12.♗a3!? deserved attention, as after 12...f5 13.♘d2 ♘f6 14.c5 White can activate his bishop by means of b4-b5 later on. Rybka prefers 14...b5, which does not look like the most natural move. I still prefer White here.

12...a6

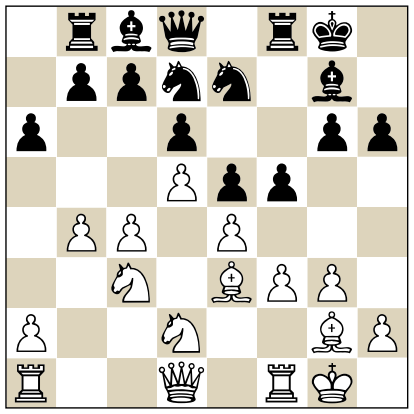
I seriously considered 12...a5, but 13.bxa5 f5 14.c5 causes Black serious problems on the queenside, for example 14...♘xc5 (14...f4 15.cxd6!) 15.♗xc5 dxc5 16.♘d2, with an edge. At least this is what I considered during the game. My Rybka plays 16...c6!, unimpressed by White's position. True, it hardly looks logical to play ...a7-a5 with the rook on b8, but on the other hand, Black wins an important tempo and the bishop on e3 might feel uncomfortable in many lines.

13.♘d2

Of course I could have inserted a move like ♕d2 or ♕c1, but I was not sure whether they would have been more useful than ...♔h7 or even ...g6-g5.

13.♘e1 was also possible, but the knight will be more active on c4 than on d3. On the other hand, with the knight on c4 the counterplay with ...g5-g4 becomes more dangerous.

13...f5 14.f3



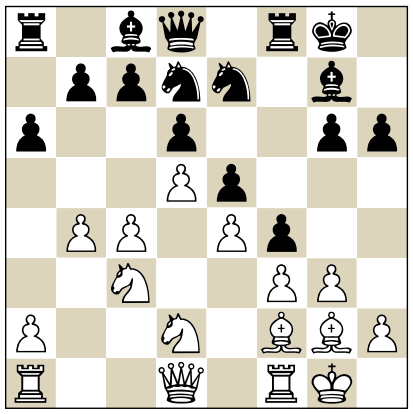
14...f4?!

14...♘f6!? was probably more accurate, even though the matter is not entirely clear, as it also gives White some additional options: 15.c5 f4 16.♗f2 h5 (16...g5 17.g4) 17.gxf4!? exf4 18.♘c4. The position is very sharp and strongly resembles a line which I analyse on the 21st move, but it seems to me that White could be slightly better. The position of the rook on b8 is not always an asset, as it creates a new possibility, namely 19.cxd6 cxd6 20.♗b6 ♕d7 21.♗a7. Things are actually a bit more difficult, but one cannot publish all remotely relevant lines.

15.♗a7!

It makes sense to deflect the rook to a8, where it often can be attacked by White's knight.

15...♖a8 16.♗f2

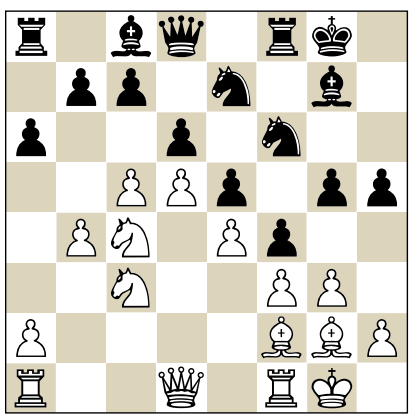


16...h5

White is slightly better after 16...a5 17.bxa5!? (17.a3 keeps an edge for White) 17...♖xa5 18.♘b3 ♖a8 19.c5; 16...g5 would have allowed me to continue 17.g4 h5 18.h3 ♘f6 19.c5. True, I was not entirely sure that my kingside would have stood such a treatment, but it seemed to me that White's play on the queenside was quicker. Neither the sacrifice on g4 nor the mate on the h-file looks like a likely scenario.

17.c5 g5 18.♘c4 ♘f6

I achieved a serious advantage, but around this time I became nervous and started to play too quickly and superficially. White has to play accurately, otherwise Black obtains very dangerous counterplay after ...g5-g4.



19.cxd6?

I believed that the queen swap would be the correct decision, but I was probably wrong. It diminishes the threats to my king, but it also helps Black to complete his development.

NEW IN CHESS

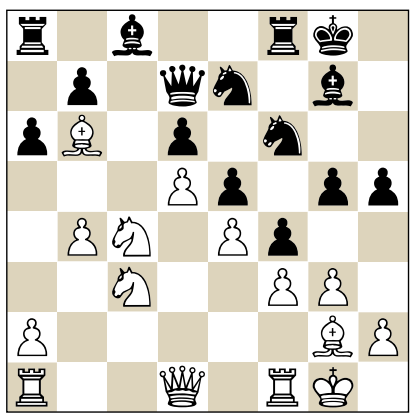
A paragon of sportsmanship, David Navara could only draw one conclusion: 'Luke therefore became the deserved winner of the tournament. There were many other participants who played well, but I was luckier this time.'

Black would like to open the kingside with ...g5-g4, but White's queenside play is quicker! Stronger was 19.♕b3!, as proposed by Michal Konopka.

19...cxd6 20.♗b6

In most classical lines it makes sense to exchange the bishop, but with g2-g3 already played 20.♘b6 ♖b8 21.♘xc8 ♖xc8 enables Black to open the kingside by means of ...g5-g4.

20...♕d7



21.♕a4

Now it is no longer easy to find a way to prove White's advantage. Perhaps I had some better move, but the position becomes very double-edged.

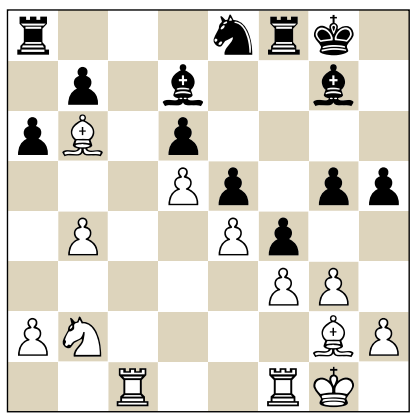
21...♕xa4 22.♘xa4 ♗d7 23.♘ab2

23.♘c3? is a blunder because of 23...♖ac8.

23...♘c8 24.♖ac1 ♖f7

I had rather expected 24...g4!?, with equal chances, but the choice is a matter of taste.

25.♗d8 ♖f8 26.♗c7 ♘e8 27.♘b6 ♘xb6 28.♗xb6



28...♗f6?!

I believe that this is not the best plan. Black should strive for counterplay rather than exchange pieces.

28...g4! looks more natural to me, even though, given the tournament situation, it might appear less logical.

29.♘c4 h4

Black wanted to put his bishop on b5, but ♗g2-h3 could be unpleasant then.

30.g4 The threat of ...h3 looked rather unpleasant.

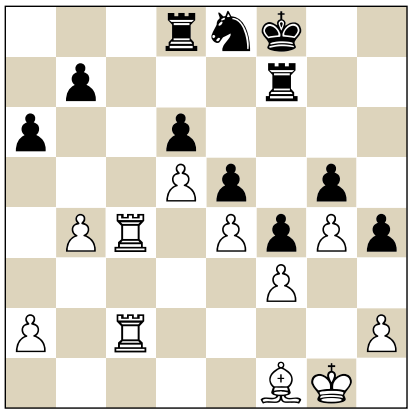
30...♗b5 31.♖f2

31.♖c3 ♗d8 32.♗f2 ♖c8 33.♖fc1 ♖f7 (McShane) should not be better for White than the game continuation.

31...♗xc4 32.♖xc4 ♗d8 33.♗xd8 ♖xd8 Nominally White has a bad bishop, but the knight on e8 is not great either and the only open line is in White's possession.

34.♗f1 ♖f7 35.♖fc2 ♔f8

We have arrived at a remarkable point. White occupies the open file and apparently stands better. But Black's position is very solid, and he can hope to exchange the rooks on c7 later. Luke was slightly short of time, whereas I had no problems in this respect. Here I had two interesting possibilities. Alas, I failed to pick the more promising one.

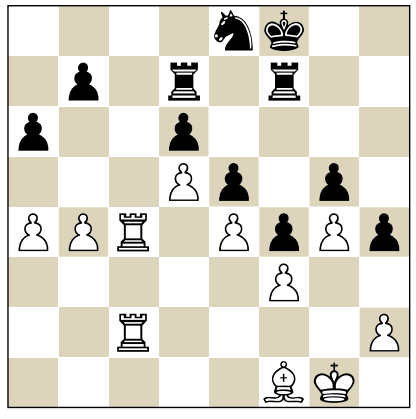


36.a4?!

This move does not prevent Black's main threat ♖d8-d7-c7. I was also worried about 36...♖a8, followed by ♔f8-e7-d8 and ♖c7, but this does not work, as we shall see.

It was better to play the strong prophylactic move 36.♖4c3! (alas, I rarely make such moves, even when I manage to find them) when 36...♘f6 (McShane) might be the best option, but White keeps serious winning chances. It makes good sense to play a4-a5 followed by a king march to the queenside or the bishop going to a4. Black also has to reckon with the advance b4-b5.

36...♖dd7!



37.♖c8

My original intention was 37.b5, but after 36...♖dd7 I realized that I would be unable to win the pawn in case of 37...axb5 38.axb5 b6, for example 39.♖c8 ♖b7 40.♖a8 ♔e7 41.♖cc8 ♘f6 42.♔f2 ♖g7, and White cannot break through. I think that some blitz

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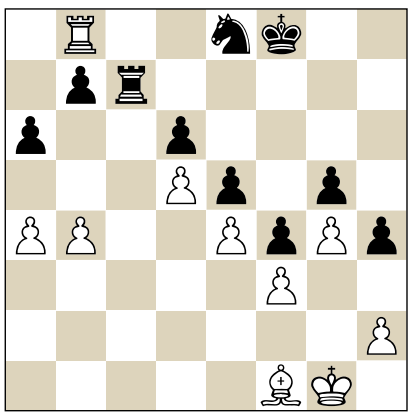
Wijk aan Zee B 2011																		cat. XVII
				1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	TPR
1	Luke McShane	IGM	ENG	2664	*	½	0	0	1	½	1	1	1	½	1	1	½	½	8½	2768
2	David Navara	IGM	CZE	2708	½	*	0	½	0	½	1	1	1	½	1	1	½	1	8½	2765
3	Zahar Efimenko	IGM	UKR	2701	1	1	*	½	½	½	0	½	½	½	½	1	1	½	8	2743
4	Le Quang Liem	IGM	VIE	2664	1	½	½	*	½	1	½	0	0	1	½	0	1	1	7½	2715
5	Wesley So	IGM	PHI	2673	0	1	½	½	*	½	½	½	0	1	1	1	½	½	7½	2715
6	Gabriel Sargissian	IGM	ARM	2667	½	½	½	0	½	*	½	1	½	½	1	½	½	1	7½	2715
7	Vladislav Tkachiev	IGM	FRA	2636	0	0	1	½	½	½	*	½	0	½	1	1	1	½	7	2690
8	Radoslaw Wojtaszek	IGM	POL	2726	0	0	½	1	½	0	½	*	1	1	0	½	½	1	6½	2654
9	Li Chao	IGM	CHN	2649	0	0	½	1	1	½	1	0	*	0	½	0	1	½	6	2631
10	Laurent Fressinet	IGM	FRA	2707	½	½	½	0	0	½	½	0	1	*	1	0	1	½	6	2626
11	Surya Ganguly	IGM	IND	2651	0	0	½	½	0	0	0	1	½	0	*	1	1	1	5½	2602
12	Wouter Spoelman	IGM	NED	2547	0	0	0	1	0	½	0	½	1	1	0	*	0	1	5	2580
13	Jon Ludvig Hammer	IGM	NOR	2647	½	½	0	0	½	½	0	½	0	0	0	1	*	½	4	2519
14	Friso Nijboer	IGM	NED	2584	½	0	½	0	½	0	½	0	½	½	0	0	½	*	3½	2490

players would have managed to move the bishop to f2 or b4 with some cunning manoeuvres, but such an idea did not even cross my mind during the game.

37...♖c7 38.♖2xc7 ♖xc7 39.♖b8



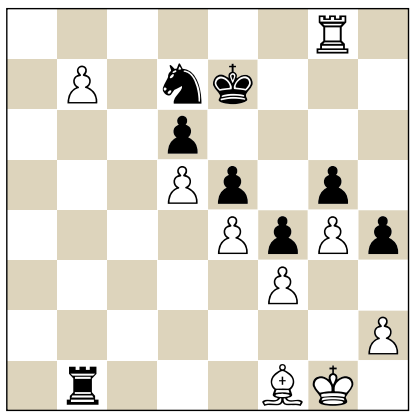
It still looks nice for White, but Luke defended very well. Although some of his moves were pretty forced, it was still very easy to go wrong.

39...♔e7 40.b5 axb5 41.axb5 ♘f6 42.b6 ♖c1 It makes good sense to pin White's bishop.

43.♖xb7+ ♘d7 44.♖c7 44.♖a7?! ♖b1 45.b7 fails to 45...♘b8, when only Black could be better.

44...♖b1 44...♖xc7?? loses to 45.bxc7 ♘b6 46.♗b5. **45.b7 ♔d8** During the game I found an amusing 'drawing' line: 45...h3 46.♔f2 ♖b2+ 47.♔e1 ♔f6 48.♖xd7 ♖e2+. Alas, in the post-mortem both GM Nunn and Luke told me that there was no stalemate. Perhaps I had solved too many studies in my youth!

46.♖c8+ ♔e7 47.♖g8



47...♔f7! I missed this witty move. Black is completely out of danger now. 47...♖xb7 48.♖xg5 could still be dangerous for Black, for example 48...♖b1 49.♖g7+, with winning chances.

48.b8♖

I would have promoted the pawn to a knight if it had not led to a loss. After my move Luke surprisingly fell into deep thought. Then he went to the arbiter's table to ask about the tie-breaks. Two other games were still in progress. It took some 10 minutes before Luke got the answer that he had a better tie-break. Had he noticed before the round that we both had identical results against 9 opponents and different results only against the remaining three, he would not have had to calculate at all. His tie-break would have remained better regardless of the results of the last round!

After 48.♖xg5 ♘f6 the rook suddenly gets trapped. However, although White cannot free it, Black is unable to capture it. I considered trying 49.♔g2 (49.♖f5 ♔g6 50.g5 ♘h7 only helps Black) 49...♖xb7 50.♗a6 ♖b2+ 51.♔h3??, but it seemed to me that it was Black who can play for the win then. Indeed, the computer shows 51...♘h7!, followed by 52...♔g6, winning on the spot. I missed this, but the other lines were not attractive either.

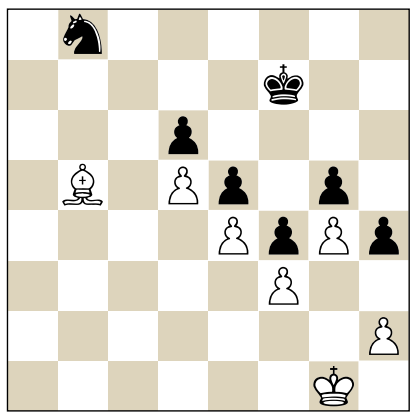
48...♖xb8

This leads to a draw.

Luke also considered 48...♘xb8 49.♖xg5 ♘a6 with sufficient compensation for the missing pawns, but under the circumstances he had no reason to avoid a draw.

49.♖xb8 49.♖xg5 ♘f6 is no better than on a previous move.

49...♘xb8 50.♗b5



The knight cannot get out without being exchanged.

50...♔e7 51.♔f2 ♔d8 52.♔e2 ♔c7 53.♔d3 ♔b6 54.♔c4 ♔a5 55.h3 ♘a6 56.♗xa6 ♔xa6 57.♔b4 ♔b6

And here a draw was agreed. After 58.♔c4 ♔a5 59.♔c3 nothing else could be done.

Luke therefore became the deserved winner of the tournament. There were many other participants who played well, but I was luckier this time. You might be surprised to read that my tournament finished with a painful loss. I lost my new pen. Needless to say, a winning one. But I will not give up! I will follow the results of the other participants in order to find out who possesses it now. If I am given an appropriate opportunity, I will take it back next year. If I succeed, next year will be a successful one for me! ☺ ■

With Magnus Carlsen, Fabiano Caruana and Wesley So among its most notable previous winners, the C-Group in Wijk aan Zee has gained a reputation as a desirable platform for youngsters on the verge of an international breakthrough. This year's edition will be remembered for the wild race between **Daniele Vocaturo** and the world's youngest GM **Illya Nyzhnyk**, that ended in the Italian's biggest success to date.

And to cap it all...

YURI GARRETT

In the two weeks that he spent in Wijk aan Zee, Daniele Vocaturo sported no fewer than six different caps. In the final round he paid tribute to Dutch football star Johan Cruyff.

Daniele Vocaturo made his Wijk aan Zee debut in last year's C-Group, where he decided all his games as White in his favour and won two beauty prizes. His third place and enterprising style were good enough reason for the organizers to ask him back. In fact, they had already invited him five(!) years ago, shortly after the Italian made his first IM-norm, but at that time neither Daniele nor his parents had fully understood what the invitation, written in English, was about, let alone why he should be happy to receive it from a place he had never heard of.

Vocaturo was born 21 years ago in Vitinia, a suburb of Rome, where only very few and quite hidden roads lead to professional chess. He learned the game by watching his sister Alessandra play, and like her he followed a course organized by the local chess club in his school when he was nine. In a typical turn-around of the classical tale, his father Renato taught himself the rules in order to help his children develop their skills in their new hobby.

Daniele's first real trainer was the Cuban GM Lexy Ortega, based in Rome, who started to work with him when young Vocaturo was 13 and trained him for three years, during which his rating went up from 2084 to 2402. The logical follow-up of his IM title, which he got when he was 16, was the GM title, but for some reason he hit a crisis in 2008 and lost almost a hundred Elo points. That was a sign for his father to seek a trainer that would put him back on track again and that was when chess publisher Yuri Garrett, who is now his manager, decided to help him. The 'V-team' was created and a personalized training program was drawn up that included a method of study, rules of conduct, motivational activities, and workshops with different international GMs. As from October 2008, Vocaturo started working with his current trainer Mihail Marin, and in May 2009 he had completed the required GM norms.

For a contemporary talent the Italian GM's interests and training methods are remarkably 'old-fashioned'. He likes to study the classics and names Smyslov, Keres, Karpov, Bronstein and Botvinnik (for the clarity and logic of his analytical works) as his favourite players. Another unusual trait is his limited use of chess engines, which he only uses to verify analytical work conducted under the 'human brains only' rule.

> Vocaturo only uses chess engines to verify analytical work conducted under the 'human brains only' rule.

To help him isolate himself from his surroundings and concentrate on his game, Vocaturo likes wearing a cap. During the Tata Steel tournament he sported no fewer than six of them, all different. Perhaps he has discovered by now which of them is his favourite one, as his adventurous play resulted in a tumultuous tournament with 8 wins, 3 losses and only 2 draws. In the final round he wore an orange cap with 14 on it, a tribute to Dutch football star Johan Cruyff. It worked, because with a couple of well-timed piece sacrifices against his rival Illya Nyzhnyk he secured the draw that he needed to stay ahead of the Ukrainian.

Asked to annotate his favourite game, Vocaturo chose his win over top seed Murtas Kazhgaleev from Kazakhstan.

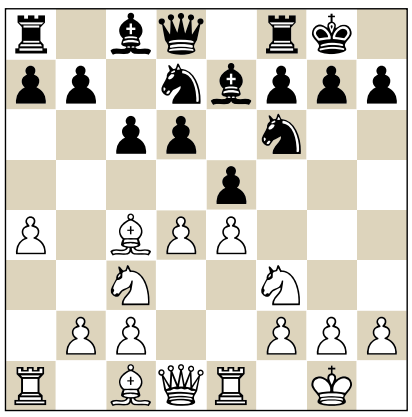
NOTES BY
Daniele Vocaturo

KP 4.13 – C41
Daniele Vocaturo
Murtas Kazhgaleev
Wijk aan Zee 2011 (3)

1.e4 d6

Unfortunately, my coach Mihail Marin and I had not anticipated this turn of events. My opponent in fact has such a vast experience and repertoire that it is almost impossible to prepare against him.

2.d4 ♘f6 3.♘c3 e5 4.♘f3 ♘bd7 5.♗c4 ♗e7 6.0-0 0-0 7.♖e1 c6 8.a4



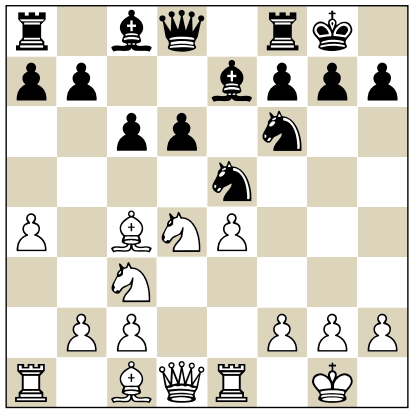
8...exd4

I must say that at this point I was already out of my book. The text-move is less popular than the usual 8...a5 or 8...b6, but apparently it has been climbing the charts of late. Af-

ter checking my database I realized that the first strong player to use it with some regularity was Bocharov, and that in the past year it has been successfully adopted by Russian GM Khismatullin.

9.♘xd4 ♘e5

I think other black options on move 9 are no less interesting, but the theory is still too limited to come to a final verdict.



10.♗f1

This withdrawal aims at a fairly harmonious set-up in which the bishop will not stand in the way of the rest of the army. Here are a few natural alternatives:

A) 10.♗a2 is a dynamic possibility that keeps the sting in the bishop. However, I feared that the eventual ...♗e6 would succeed in simplifying the position. A practical example of this plan is the following: 10...♖e8 11.h3 ♗d7 12.♗f4 ♕a5 13.♗b3 ♗d8! (13...♕b4 14.a5!) 14.♗d2 ♕c5 15.♘f3 ♗e6!, and in Vorobiov-Khismatullin, Kavala 2010, Black had no problems at all;

B) 10.♗e2 was played recently in Karjakin-Khismatullin, Moscow 2010. White probably wants to play f4, reserving the natural f3-square for the bishop. However, I had in mind several games in which Miles succeeded in exploiting the hyperextension of the white centre with energetic and instructive play, so I decided not to give my opponent such a target. I should add that Khismatullin actually had good chances in the aforementioned game after 10...♖e8 11.f4 ♘g6 12.a5 ♗f8 13.♕d3 ♗d7 14.♗d2 c5 15.♘f3 ♗c6 16.♗f1 b5, with fantastic counterplay.

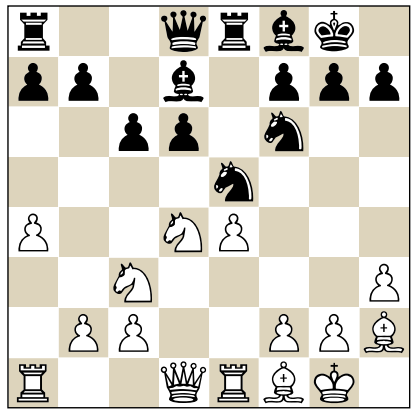
10...♖e8 11.h3!?

The start of a complex plan aiming at piece rather than pawn play. I knew that my queen's bishop future was a dominant theme of the game, so I decided to give it a square on h2! In its new home, it will exert pressure on the d6-square, keep an eye on the centre and facilitate a future thrust to e5.

Another possible development for the bishop is to fianchetto it after 11.b3. However, I was forced to abandon this idea because of the thematic 11...d5! 12.exd5 ♗b4!, and White seems to be in trouble. An interesting line that I saw during the game goes: 13.♗d2 ♗g4! 14.f3 ♗xf3! 15.gxf3 ♕b6, and Black's plus is undeniable.

11...♗f8 12.♗f4 ♗d7 13.♗h2

Both sides are completing their development and soon the critical moment when the armies get in touch will arrive. Kazhgaleev was probably worried by some violent central action, so he tried to kill two birds with one stone, i.e. to continue his development and to find targets for his attack, by playing:



13...♕b6?!

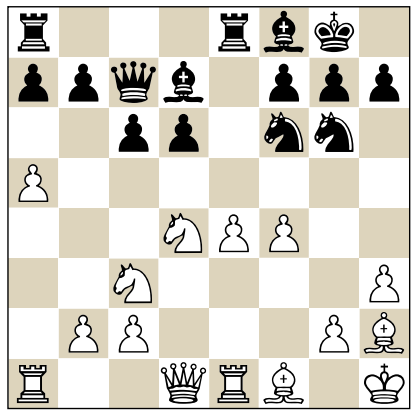
However, his idea will ultimately prove to be inefficient and it would have been wiser to follow in Khismatullin's footsteps with 13...♕a5!?.

14.a5! My opponent had clearly anticipated that this move was in his favour, because after ...b6 the a-file would have been cleared even faster. However, Black actually loses a tempo for his development, and his plan proves to be too slow.

14...♕c7 14...♕xb2? would be a serious mistake, since after 15.♕d2 the queen is trapped (15...♕b4 16.♖a4).

15.♔h1 Sooner or later the king had to be sheltered against the many serious threats along the g1-a7 diagonal.

15...♘g6 16.f4



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16...b5

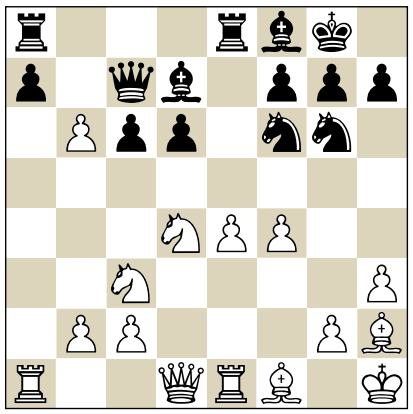
Many commentators criticized this move and, in the light of the post-mortem analysis, their judgement seems to be right. It is certainly true that Black needs to find some breathing space, but this consolidates White's positional advantage.

The natural alternative lies in 16...♖ad8.

While playing 14.a5 I had foreseen the possibility of starting some interesting tactical operation with 17.a6!? b5 18.e5 dxe5 19.fxe5 ♘xe5 20.♗xe5 ♖xe5 21.♖xe5 ♕xe5 22.♘xc6 ♗xc6 23.♕xd8, ending an exchange up. However, Black seems to enjoy excellent compensation after 23...b4!, followed by 24...♘e4. I must admit that with my fascination for material, I would have most likely entered this position which favours Black.

Best would have been 17.♕d2, retaining the upper hand by virtue of the spatial advantage.

17.axb6



17...♕xb6

A sad necessity which gravely impairs Black's structure.

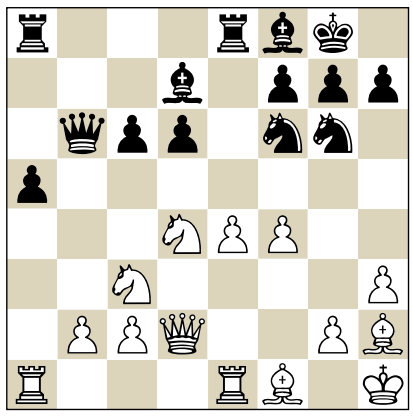
17...axb6?! was impossible because of 18.♖xa8 ♖xa8 19.e5. Now a possible line is 19...♘e8 20.e6 (20.♗c4!? is stronger but I had not analysed it during the game) 20...fxe6 21.♘xe6 ♗xe6 22.♖xe6 ♕f7 23.♗c4 d5 24.♖xg6! ♕xg6 25.♘xd5 ♔h8 26.♘xb6, and White has some advantage.

18.♕d2 a5

I think this is a good move, otherwise I would have played 19.♖a6 followed by ♖da1, exerting quite some pressure on the a7 pawn.

YURI GARRETT

Daniele Vocaturo, deeply concentrated in his game against top-seed Murtas Kazhgaleev. 'This win was important for my tournament, as it not only came against a direct contender for first place but also gave me the lead for the first time.'



19.♘b3

The immediate 19.e5 would have netted some material, but I rejected it in view of 19...dxe5 20.fxe5 ♘d5 21.♘xc6 ♗xc6 22.♘xd5 ♖ad8, and Black would have had some initiative, especially considering that the e5 pawn appears to be doomed.

19...♖ed8

Desperately seeking counterplay in the centre.

After 19...♗e6 I intended 20.♘c1!, aiming for the d3-square, where the knight will intensify pressure on the vital e5-square.

20.♗d3 d5

This central reaction is premature. However, it is already difficult to find a good plan for Black, and for this very reason I do not feel like overly criticizing this move. I should also add that in the long run passive play would have given free rein to White's army because of the many weaknesses in Black's camp.

21.e5 ♘e4

22.♘xe4!

22.♗xe4 would have given a few chances to Black after 22...dxe4 23.♕e3 ♕xe3 24.♖xe3 h5, and the bishop pair is partial compensation for the pawn.

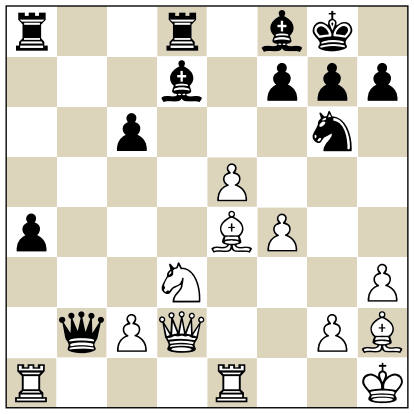
22...dxe4 23.♗xe4 a4 23...♗xh3 24.♕e3 ♕xe3 25.♖xe3 ♗d7 26.♘xa5 is also hopeless for Black.

24.♘c1! We already know this manoeuvre, on which I had based much of my analysis. Now the knight joins the attack with tempo.

24...♕xb2

24...♗xh3 25.♘d3 ♗d7 26.f5 ♘e7 27.♕g5, with an overwhelming attack.

25.♘d3



25...♕d4

The alternatives are no better. Let's have a look at them in greater detail:

A) 25...♕b5 26.f5 ♘e7 (26...♘h8 needs no further comment!) 27.♖ab1 ♕a6 (27...♕a5 28.♕xa5 ♖xa5 29.e6! intending ♗c7 attacking both rooks) 28.♘c5 ♕c8 29.f6, and White gets a dream position after the forced line 29...♘g6 30.♘b7 ♖e8 31.fxg7 ♔xg7 32.♘d6 ♗xd6 33.exd6;

B) 25...♕b6 26.f5 ♘e7 27.♖ab1, merging into line A;

C) 25...♕b7 26.f5 ♘e7 27.♘c5 ♕c8 28.f6 ♘g6 29.♘xd7 ♖xd7 30.♕c3, and White is clearly better;

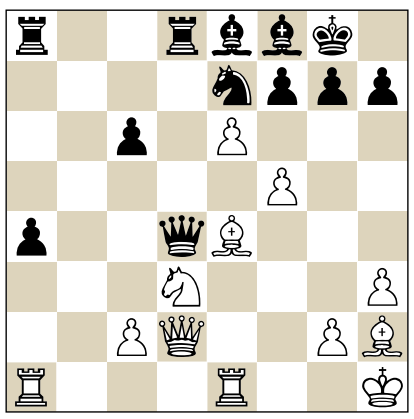
D) 25...♗e8!? is an interesting engine suggestion. The best continuation appears to be 26.♘xb2 ♖xd2 27.♖xa4 ♖xa4 28.♘xa4, and Black has too little compensation.

26.f5 ♘e7 27.e6!

At last the bishop on h2 enters the game, since the e5-square is now vacated.

27...♗e8

27...fxe6 28.♗e5 ♕a7 29.f6, and Black's castle is wrecked.



28.♗c7!

I should confess to the reader that when playing this I felt a kind of bliss, since it appeared to be the glorious crowning of the plan that started with 11.h3!

White still had time to spoil it all with 28.♗e5?? ♕xe5!.

28...c5

Giving up the exchange to get rid of at least one bishop.

28...♖dc8 allowed 29.♗e5 ♕a7 30.f6, and White's attack is devastating.

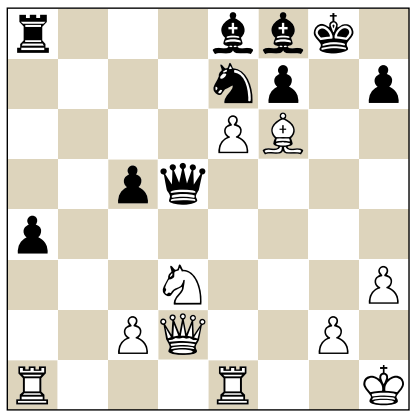
29.♗xa8

Faster was 29.♗xd8 ♖xd8 30.exf7+ ♗xf7 31.♕a5, netting the a-pawn.

29...♖xa8 30.♗e5 ♕d5 31.f6

31.♕g5 was also good. I rejected it in view of 31...f6!? 32.♗xf6 h6 33.♕g3 ♘xf5, but apparently after 34.♕g4 Black's counterplay is insufficient.

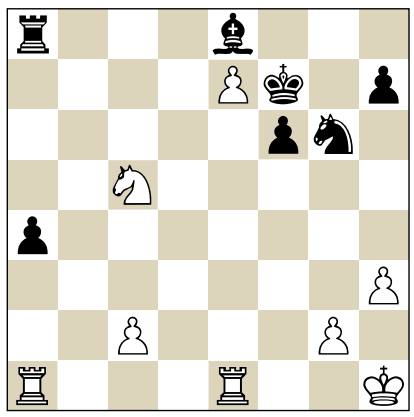
31...gxf6 32.♗xf6



32...♘g6

32...fxe6 was better, although not enough to change matters: 33.♖e5 ♕d7 (33...♕d6 34.♕e2) 34.♖g5+ ♘g6 35.♕e3, and White's material and positional advantage are decisive.

33.e7 ♗g7 34.♗xg7 ♔xg7 35.♕c3+ f6 36.♕xc5 ♕xc5 37.♘xc5 ♔f7



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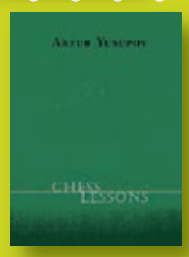

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selves what there still is to be analysed in the diagrammed position! Well, the fact is that at this stage of the game I kind of relaxed and, with the sole view to reach move 40, almost spoilt all the previous good work...

38.♖ab1?!

I cannot really explain what led me to relinquish control of Black's a-pawn. Many other moves would have won more or less immediately, the easiest being 38.♘b7 ♘xe7 39.♘d6+ ♔f8 40.♘xe8 ♔xe8 41.♖a3, grabbing the a4 pawn.

38...a3 39.♖b3?!

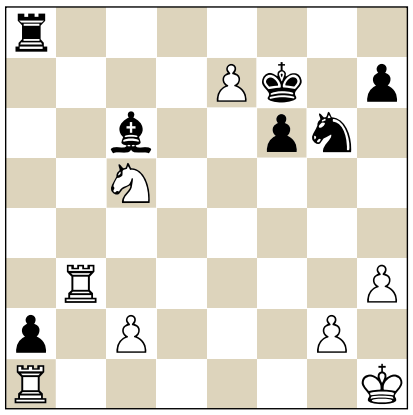
Initially I intended to play 39.♖b7, but unfortunately I had missed 39...♘e5! (39...a2 40.♖a1) 40.♘e4 ♔e6 and, in the erroneous conviction that I had blown most of my advantage, I deemed it necessary to admit that my previous move was wrong and returned to seize my opponent's passed pawn. Quite to the contrary, however, 41.♖f1! would have ended the game almost on the spot.

39...a2

39...♘e5 was more tenacious. However, after 40.♖a1 ♘c4 41.♖b4 White's advantage remains overwhelming.

40.♖a1 ♗c6

40...♔xe7 runs into 41.♖b2 ♗f7 42.♘b3.



41.♘d3?!

In this stage of the game I was clearly in a state of complete mental confusion.

Stronger was 41.♖b2 ♘f4 42.♖bxa2 ♖g8 43.♖e1, and Black can resign.

41...♗d5 42.♖b5?!

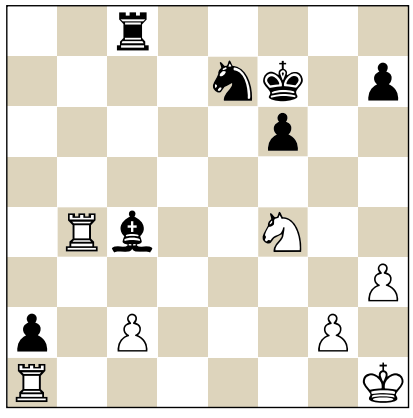
It was still possible to go for 42.♖b2 ♘xe7 43.♘c1.

42...♘xe7 43.♘f4 ♗c4 44.♖b4

Only now did I realize that 44.♖c5? is impossible, because of 44...♖b8!.

44...♖c8

At this point I realized that the game was slipping away and I sank deeply into thought: I had to start afresh and build up the win again. After all, not all the advantage had vanished, even though converting it into a win was now much more complicated.



45.♔h2

A good move at last! The king was uncomfortable on the first rank and from here it will defend the important g3- and h3-squares.

45...♖c7?!

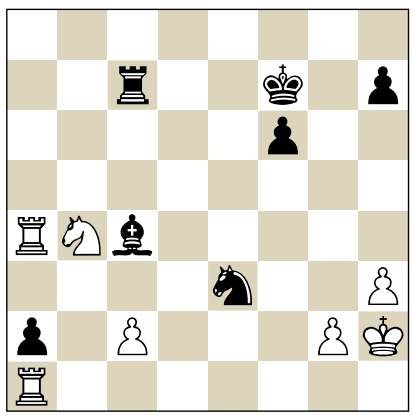
Played with a view to avoiding annoyances on the seventh rank.

As for myself, I would have opted for 45...♔f8 in order to leave the f7-square for the bishop. After 46.♖a4 (46.♖b7 ♖a8) 46...♗f7 47.♖1xa2 ♗xa2 48.♖xa2 ♖c4 49.g3 Black would have had chances to save the game despite being a pawn down.

46.♖a4!

Besieging the advanced pawn again, this time taking no prisoners.

46...♘f5 47.♘d3 ♘e3 48.♘b4



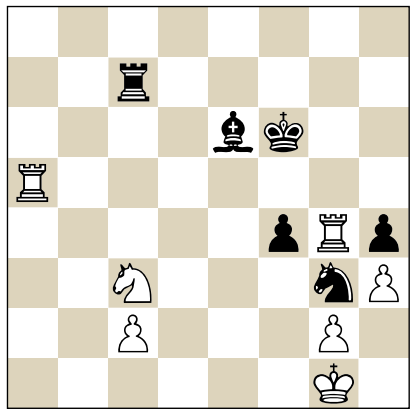
White's plan has been fulfilled and the advantage is again decisive. Having learnt my lesson, I did not let it slip away again!

48...f5 Trying to bring in fresh troops, but to no avail.

49.♘xa2 ♔f6

49...♘xc2 50.♖c1 ♘e3 51.♖c3 f4 52.♘c1, and Black's pieces are completely tied up.

50.♖e1 f4 51.♘c3 ♔f5 52.♘d1 ♘f1+ 53.♔g1 ♘g3 54.♖a5+ ♔g6 55.♘c3 h5 56.♖ee5 h4 57.♖g5+ ♔f6 58.♖g4 ♗e6



59.♘e4+!

The final tactical blow that liquidates Black's annoying stallion!

59...♔e7 60.♖g7+ ♗f7 61.♘xg3 hxg3 62.♖f5

Black resigned.

This win was important for my tournament, as it not only came against a direct contender for first place but also gave me the lead for the first time. It also symbolically reflects the general course of my tournament: once I obtained a virtually decisive advantage I would almost spoil it entirely before finally pulling myself together again and marching steadily towards the desired goal.

■■■

While Vocaturo takes refuge in the quiet world of thoughts below his cap, Illya Nyzhnyk finds his concentration behind an ultra-serious expression underneath a big head of curly hair. The 14-year-old Ukrainian's rating was more than 100 points lower than the top seed's in the C-Group, but you only had to watch him and his equally

serious-looking mother for a few moments to realize that the youngest GM in the world was playing for first place and nothing else. Perhaps typical of the family's ambitions was his mother's remark when her son shared first place in Groningen last December to make his final GM norm and someone congratulated her. Without showing any delight she retorted: 'I'd rather he had won outright.'

Under the watchful eye of countless spectators in De Moriaan, the young boy stayed in the race for first place till the very last day, when he failed to upset the leader, Vocaturo.

At his school, in the city of Vinnytsia, where Hitler's Werewolf headquarters were located during the second World War, the teachers are understanding about Illya's chess. He has an individual timetable and reads his books and literature independently. He takes his exams separately and he gets top marks.

In his free time he is keen on reading books (fantasy is his preferred genre), he enjoys playing table tennis and also likes tennis and football. He has a pet dog and always takes it out for walks when he's home. The dog's name? Pawn! Pawn? Because the dog is black and white!

His father is a computer programmer and his mother, a former construction engineer, always accompanies the boy to tournaments. It's difficult to overestimate his parents' contribution to his overall success. They want to see a smart and educated Illya who is also completely dedicated to chess. Illya learnt to read at the age of three and to play chess at four. He studies it for five to six hours a day now.

Despite his second place (which obviously was an excellent result) he had a great time at the Tata Steel tournament and when he was asked about his dreams he said that he hoped to play in Wijk aan Zee 16 times, like the world champion, Vishy Anand.

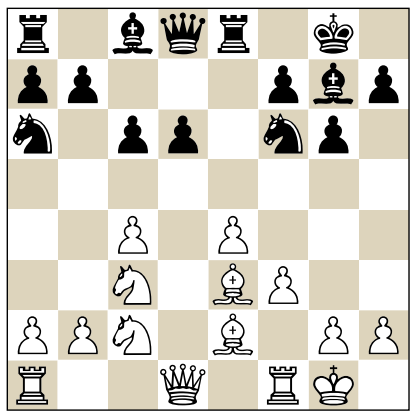
Coincidentally, Nyzhnyk also chose to annotate his game against the highest rated participant.

NOTES BY
Illya Nyzhnyk

KI 15.3 – E94
Illya Nyzhnyk
Murtas Kazhgaleev
Wijk aan Zee 2011 (1)

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.♘c3 ♗g7 4.e4 d6 5.♗e2 0-0 6.♘f3 e5 7.0-0 exd4 8.♘xd4 ♖e8 9.f3 c6 10.♘c2 ♘a6 11.♗e3?!

To be honest, I simply mixed up the moves. In my preparations was the variation 11.♔h1 ♘c7 12.♗e3 d5 13.exd5 cxd5 14.c5 with a white edge.

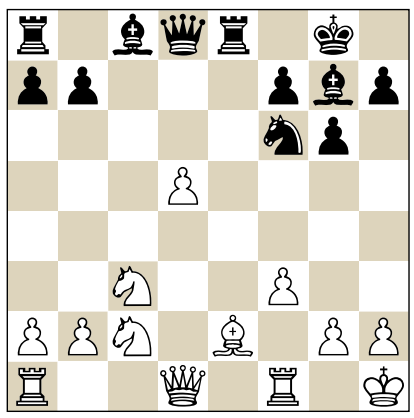


11...d5 12.cxd5 cxd5 13.exd5

I still don't understand why I spent 40 minutes on this elementary move, which in the course of the game I was to greatly regret.

13...♘b4 14.♘xb4 ♖xe3 15.♘c2 ♖e8 16.♔h1

In this position I thought that Black had sufficient compensation for the pawn.

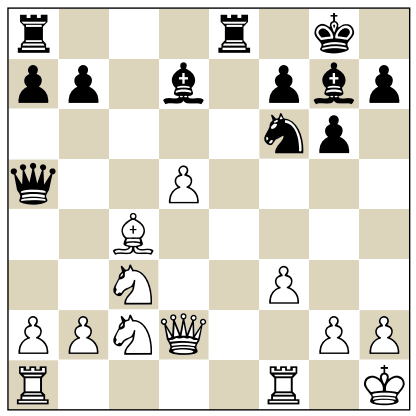


16...♕a5?!

An inaccuracy, which allows White to consolidate. Correct was 16...♕b6, e.g. 17.♕d2 ♗f5 18.♘d4 ♘xd5! 19.♘xd5? ♕xd4 20.♕xd4 ♗xd4 21.♘c7 ♖xe2 22.♘xa8 ♖xb2 23.♘c7 ♗e5 and Black has an edge.

17.♗c4! ♗d7 18.♕d2

A critical moment in the game. After a few inaccuracies by the opponent I have managed to consolidate, and Black no longer has compensation for the pawn he has given up.



18...h5?

A serious mistake. This move greatly weakens the kingside pawn structure. It seemed to me that my opponent somewhat overrated his position, although it was not at all easy to find a plan for Black.

He should have played 18...♖ac8 19.♗b3 ♘h5! 20.♘d4 ♕d8 21.g3 ♕b6 22.♖ad1 a6 with compensation for the pawn.

19.♕f2! a6 20.♖ad1 ♖ac8 21.♗b3 ♕c5!?

The correct move. Black must try to

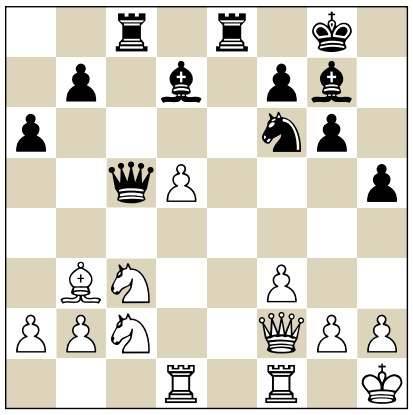
Wijk aan Zee C 2011 — **cat. XI**

					TPR
1	Daniele Vocaturo	IGM	ITA	2570	9	2643
2	Illya Nyzhnyk	IM	UKR	2530	8½	2615
3	Kateryna Lahno	IGM	UKR	2518	8	2593
4	Ivan Ivanisevic	IGM	SRB	2630	7½	2555
5	Dariusz Swiercz	IGM	POL	2540	7½	2562
6	Mark Bluvshtein	IGM	CAN	2590	7½	2558
7	Murtas Kazhgaleev	IGM	KAZ	2637	7	2526
8	Benjamin Bok	IM	NED	2453	6½	2511
9	Tania Sachdev	IM	IND	2391	6½	2516
10	Sebastian Siebrecht	IGM	GER	2439	5½	2455
11	Mark van der Werf	IM	NED	2439	5	2425
12	Robin van Kampen	IM	NED	2443	4½	2402
13	Roeland Pruijssers	IM	NED	2484	4	2368
14	Jan-Willem de Jong	IM	NED	2437	4	2372

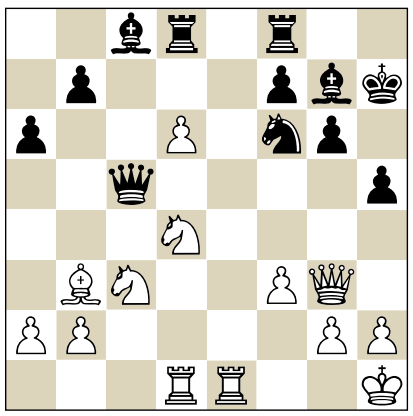
© NEW IN CHESS

Many hands make light work. Assisted by two countrymen, GM Alexander Sulypa and his coach Vladimir Baklan, 14-year-old Illya Nyzhnyk has another look at his flashy win over German GM Sebastian Siebrecht.

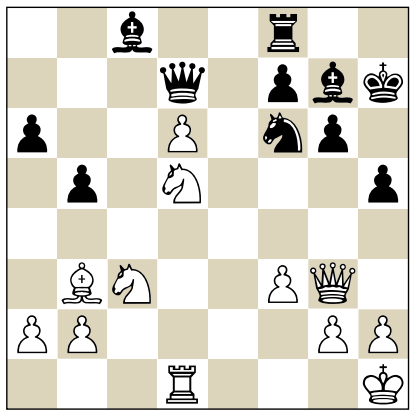
exchange the queens and blockade the d6-point, but things are not so simple.



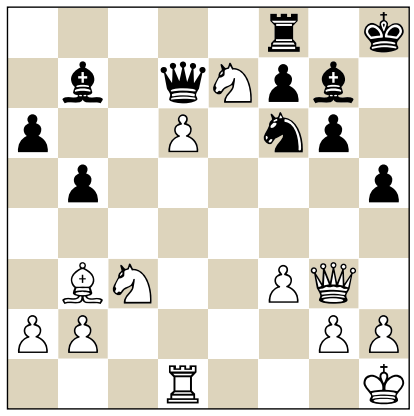
22.♕g3! Avoiding the exchange of queens and maintaining the tension.
22...♖cd8 23.♘d4!?
23.d6 ♗e6 and Black has a good game.
23...♔h7
The only move. 23...♗f8 did not work because of the strong 24.♘e6!.
24.d6 ♖f8 25.♖fe1 ♗c8



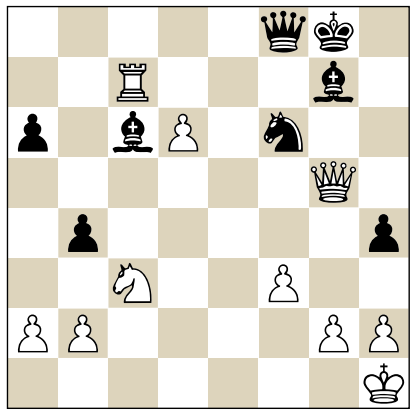
26.♘c2?!
Alas, the knight returns to the very square from which it has made such efforts to come into play. 26.♘a4 was stronger, maintaining the knight in its good position.
26...b5 27.♖e5 ♕b6 28.♖e7 ♖d7 29.♘e3! ♕d8 30.♖xd7 ♕xd7
White has a winning advantage after 30...♗xd7 31.♘ed5 ♘xd5 32.♘xd5 ♗xb2 33.♘e7 ♕e8 34.♖e1 ♗c3 35.♖e4.
31.♘ed5



31...♗b7?
The decisive mistake, after which Black loses by force.
Chances of something resembling a fight would have been retained by 31...♘xd5, although White is winning after 32.♘xd5 ♕f5 33.♘e7 ♕f6 34.♘xc8 ♖xc8 35.d7 ♖d8 36.♕e1!.
32.♘e7 ♔h8



33.♗xf7! The rest is simple. **33...♖xf7 34.♘xg6+ ♔g8 35.♘e5 ♕e6 36.♘xf7 ♕xf7 37.♖e1 h4 38.♕g5 ♗c6 39.♖e7 ♕f8 40.♖c7 b4**



41.d7! ♘xd7 42.♘d5 ♕e8 43.♖c8 Black resigned.

(We would like to thank Janis Nisii and Alexander Sulypa for the biographical information they provided about Daniele Vocaturo and Illya Nyzhnyk for this article – ed.) ■

Luke McShane

The Golden Fleece

M.C. Escher certainly missed a chance to depict the eternal library of chess improvement.

For more years than I care to remember, I've enjoyed reading the New In Chess book reviews section. Many years ago, Matthew Sadler's absorbingly passionate columns were always a treat to read, and more recently Jonathan Rowson's eclectic taste has made me think about chess in more ways than I thought possible. And so my excitement in picking up the baton is tinged with a little disappointment, as each new copy of the magazine will contain one surprise less than I'm used to. Thankfully, I'm very confident that Jonathan has not written his last word for New In Chess.

It's a daunting task to fill Matthew and Jonathan's shoes, but also a pleasure. Quite simply, I've loved reading all kinds of chess books from a very young age. Perhaps fortune played a part in that, as I remember winning a prize of hundreds of pounds worth of chess books, and happily making my selection from a list of treasures. Twenty years ago, laptops were still a luxury item, and the Internet Chess Club was yet to be born, so the habit of learning from books has stayed with me ever since.

Learning from books? Not just reading books, enjoying books? That is a curious obsession shared by authors, publishers and consumers and remains something of a mystery. Almost everyone knows there is room for improvement in their playing strength, if only there were time and inclination to study X, Y and Z. Since the staircase of chess improvement (treadmill sounds far too bleak) stretches out almost infinitely from whatever level we are at, it is remarkable that the urge to take a few steps along it is so widely shared. Perhaps it is analogous to the mindset of someone who collects things, whatever things they may be. I'm as guilty as the rest, so all this is intended merely as an observation rather than as some world-weary critique of the chess populace. If chess improvement and collecting are both staircases in their own right, M.C. Escher certainly missed a chance to depict the eternal library of chess improvement.

In any case, it is clear to me that many of the books which have taught me the most are not the ones I had set out to study in a purposeful fashion, but rather the ones that captured my imagination, and made me keen to devour the contents several times over. Of course, there is also no clear dividing line between chess books meant for improving, and others which only aim to entertain and divert us. Jonathan

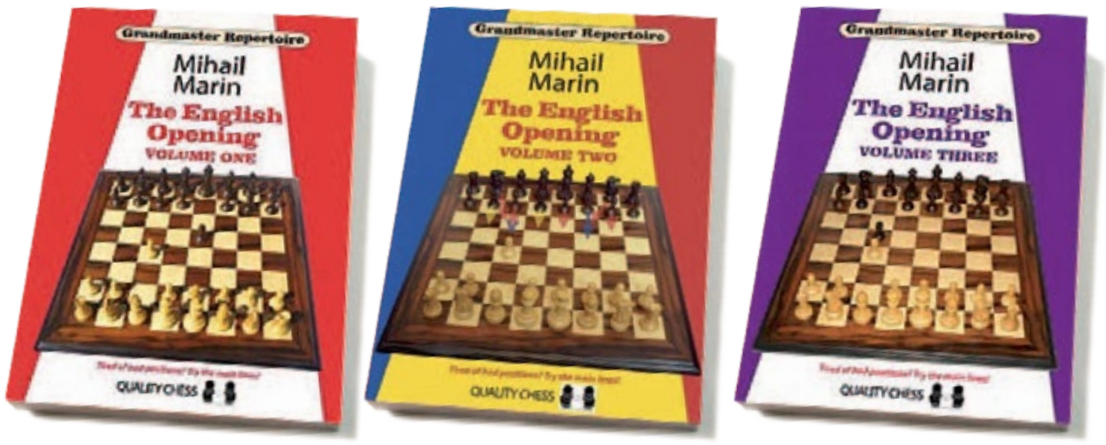
In his 50th Rowson's Reviews in New In Chess 2011/1 **Jonathan Rowson** mentioned the 'demands of work and family' that have wrested away chess from the centre of his life. In these changed circumstances and facing new challenges, Jonathan has indicated to us that, much as he continued to enjoy writing for our pages, he increasingly felt it as a burden to deliver a column for every issue. We are deeply grateful for the unique articles with which Jonathan has enriched our magazine for more than six years and we are delighted that he has expressed his firm wish to keep writing for us.

We are equally delighted that **Luke McShane** accepted our invitation to fill his shoes. As our readers know from experience, Luke is a formidable player and a gifted writer, whose style is marked by intelligence, wit and common sense. He is the third British grandmaster to be our book reviewer in a fine tradition that started with **Matthew Sadler**. Incidentally, Matthew wrote his first column for New In Chess 2000/1, which had a 16-year-old Luke McShane on the cover, as the latter also made his debut in that issue with his impressions from Hastings!

Rowson has been a close friend for many years, and I remember that once upon a time he advised me to try reading some chess autobiographies. At the time, it was a genre that had never particularly excited me, but I hoped that it might improve my chess, so I started plodding through Botvinnik's *One Hundred Selected Games*. At first, this didn't come naturally to me at all, and the blurb's earnest promise that 'A careful study of these 100 games should prove rewarding to anyone interested in modern chess' didn't seem very relevant fifty years later. Botvinnik's dour writing style is not an easy one to love, but for some reason (perhaps through the universal language that is chess) I came to realise that dressed up in the reams of stern advice was a dynamic, uncompromising playing style, and an account of a very personal journey. After a while, comments such as this one: *'It is a well known fact that almost all the outstanding chess-players have been first class analysts. The deduction is irresistible: anyone who wishes to become an outstanding chess-player must aim at perfection in the realm of analysis'* became charming rather than intimidating and I finished the book very easily. (Perhaps the reason it makes me laugh is that if you replace 'analysts' and 'analysis' with 'egotists' and 'egotism' the deduction begins to look a little less compelling!) Although it is customary to review only the new, my own stern disclaimer is this: it is an obvious, but less considered fact that almost all the outstanding chess books were written in the past. If you're on the hunt for good chess books, don't forget to check your own shelves. Nevertheless, a few superb books were written recently, and many more will be written in the future, and I look forward to reading and writing about those too.

Around the same time as I read Botvinnik's book, I was keen to expand my opening repertoire. For some players, it comes very naturally to dabble in different openings, but my repertoire at the time was very narrow. To tell the truth, I had absolutely no understanding of the Grünfeld, since I played almost exclusively 1.e4 with white, and with black I never understood why I should invite white to strengthen his centre by playing ...♘xc3 bxc3. But as luck would have it, I once stumbled into this structure from a Slav (at which point I should also mention Matthew Sadler's two fine books on the Slav and Semi-Slav, which inspired me to try that opening). Having reached the structure by accident, it became clear to me that Black's position had some merits after all, and soon after that game I decided to reconsider the Grünfeld. In order to pick that up, I read Rowson's book *Understanding the Grünfeld* in some detail. It is, in many ways, a model opening book, containing large amounts of verbal explanation, as well as personal opinions and inspirational games and ideas. Nevertheless, this was so new to me that I wanted a second perspective, being nervous that I would struggle to handle the resulting positions correctly. On my bookshelf I found an even older book, Gennady Nesis' *Tactics in the Grünfeld*. Other books in that series examine the King's Indian, Sicilian and French, and I was reminded of those when looking at a new book written in the same spirit, Yuri Yakovich's *Sicilian Attacks*. This book contains thirty-two illustrative games, with many more games included in the notes. I have the impression that it is written primarily from White's point of view, although players on the Black side would presumably find it helpful too. The games are divided up approximately by structure (Scheveningen, Taimanov, Rauzer, d6/e5, and Dragon) but naturally many of the important themes overlap. For someone with little experience in the Sicilian, (perhaps a lifelong 1.d4 player), the Sicilian is probably the most daunting opening of all, and a book like this one by Yakovich can serve a useful role in bridging the gap between learning variations and actually playing an opening with success. For example, even if you've never played the Sicilian before, you may be very familiar with the idea of White sacrificing a knight on d5. But playing over a couple of carefully annotated games can provide a much better feeling for when such a sacrifice is speculative, or simply strong. I wish this genre were more popular.

Mihail Marin's excellent repertoire books on the English Opening have helped to cement the reputation of Quality Chess' Grandmaster Repertoire series. Marin's first volume (published back in 2009) looks at the positions after 1.c4 e5 while the subsequent volumes were published late in 2010 covering 1.c4 c5 in the third volume and everything else (mostly Slav and QGD setups) in the second. Those



Mihail Marin, Grandmaster Repertoire series 3, 4 & 5: The English Opening Volumes One, Two and Three (Quality Chess)

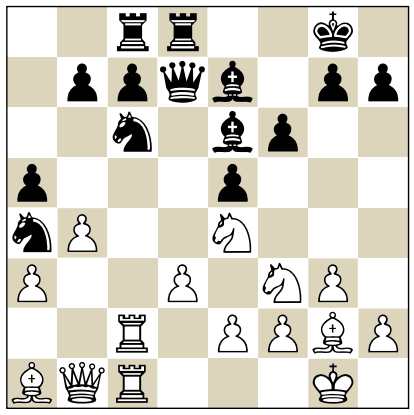
Through the Luking Glass

volumes arrived early enough to encourage me to try the English in my game against Magnus Carlsen from the London Chess Classic in December, and indeed Marin's recommendations turned out to be rather useful, as I mentioned in my annotations in the previous issue of New In Chess. The English is often regarded as less ambitious than 1.e4 or 1.d4, although many players use it with the intention of later transposing to 1.d4 main lines. Marin takes care to provide a coherent and independent English repertoire throughout (while mentioning the moments where a transposition to, say, the Catalan might be quite suitable), and tries to prove an advantage in all variations. Of course, that is a rather quixotic endeavour in any opening, and Marin is well aware that this goes against conventional wisdom, particularly in the English. But he makes a persuasive case, and I came away with the opinion that 1.c4 is no less challenging than the first-move alternatives. In a repertoire book, there is always a slight danger of fudging the evaluation even when the resulting position is not totally satisfactory, but in the vast majority of cases I fully agreed with the author's judgement. It's clear that a lot of very human analysis was brought to bear on the problem, and Marin also credits the 'invaluable help from Valentin Stoica' in each volume. Incidentally, many chess books these days suffer from an excess of computer variations and not enough human insight, but in these books I noticed a couple of positions where the computer found even simpler solutions that went unmentioned.

To my mind, picking through the analysis and finding some nuances of personal disagreement is part of the essence of studying an opening, but parroting this repertoire, if your memory is up to it, wouldn't be a bad place to start. The theoretical aspects of this series are strong, but as theory advances, and these lines are tested, some of the ideas will lose their bite,

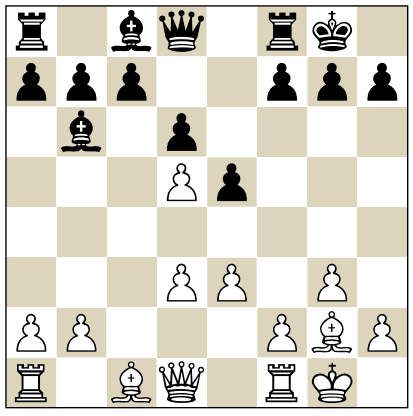
> In fact in a couple of games I found myself following some of Marin's recommendations by accident – without consciously committing anything to memory.

and Black players will concoct new ideas of their own. That is inevitable, but this series is more than just a theoretical treatise. Marin's deep experience and passion for the English Opening is clear throughout the book. Here is a lovely example from the first volume, from the game Suba-Solozhenkin, Berga 1993.



19.♘eg5!!± Page 303: 'I was playing a dull game on the next board. Since the opening of this encounter interested me, I turned my eyes to it quite often. When White picked up his knight I had no doubt that the move would be 19.♘c5, and so I turned back to my own game. A few moves later, I could not understand how the position on the board had been reached. Finding a move like 19.♘eg5, especially when there is a reasonable alternative (19.♘c5) requires a special feel for the dynamics of chess, a lot of imagination and, last but not least, an artist's soul.' **19...axb4** 19...fxg5 20.♖xc6! bxc6 21.♘xe5 ♕e8 22.♗xc6 leaves White two very healthy pawns for the exchange. **20.♘xe6 ♕xe6 21.axb4 ♘xb4 22.♖c4!** The tactics aren't over yet. Marin observes that capturing on c7 would have allowed Black some counterplay. **22...c5 23.♕b3! b5 24.♖xb4 c4 25.♖bxc4 bxc4 26.♕xa4 cxd3 27.♖xc8 ♖xc8 28.exd3** and White went on to win.

Here is another passage from that first volume, showing Marin's flair for explanation and eye for detail.



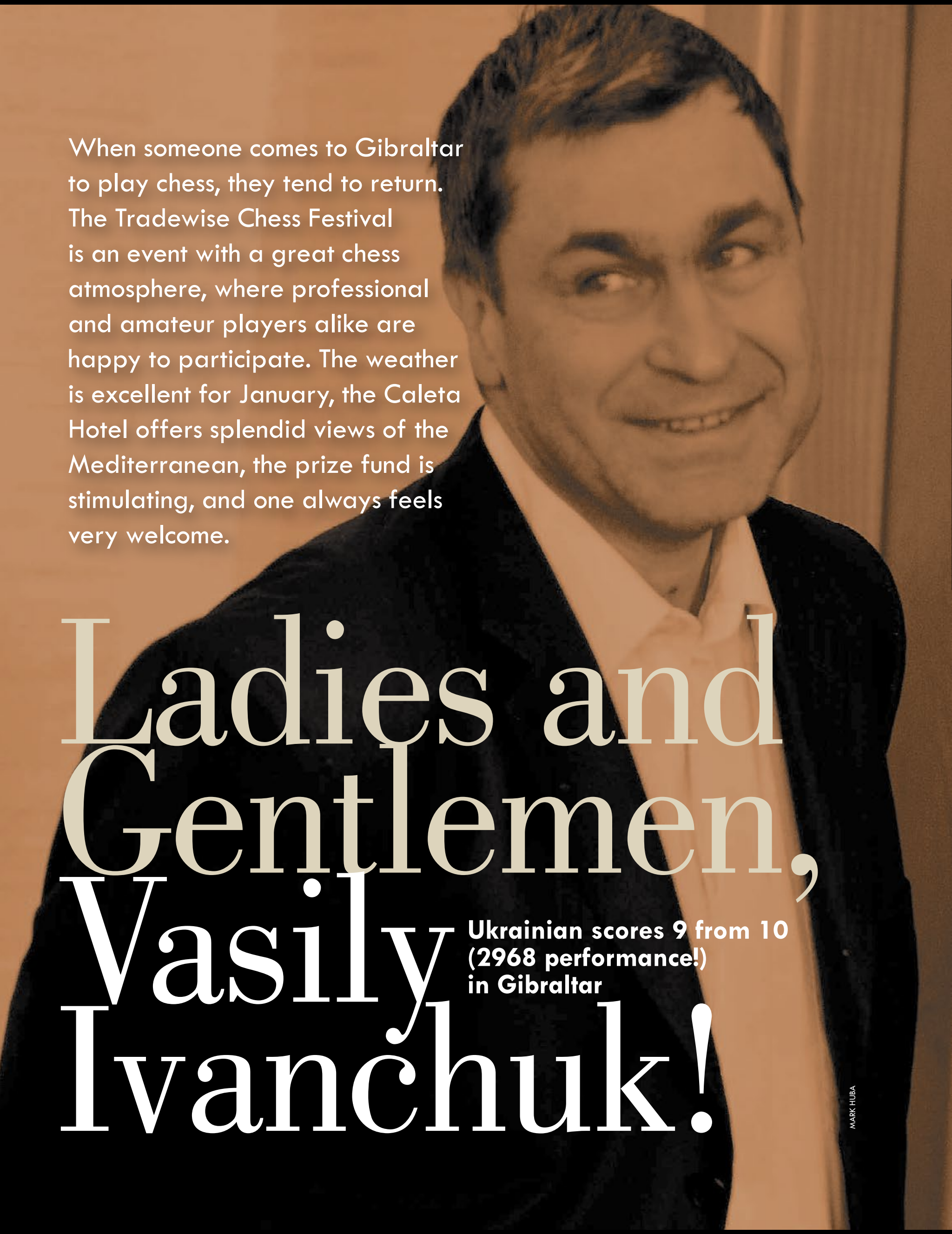
The last move was 11...♗d4-b6. Page 127: 'The situation may seem completely uninteresting, because of the absence of knights and of obvious pawn breaks. In reality, White has good chances to impose his will if he finds a way to combine his ideas on both wings. On the queenside he will try to win space and challenge the stability of the b6-bishop, thus transforming the c7-pawn into a potential weakness. Specifically, he will push his a- and b-pawns as far as allowed. On the kingside it seems to be Black who has attacking chances, but a well timed f2-f4 would not only keep things under control, but also allow White to develop a strong initiative on this

wing. In view of all this, White will have to keep the dark squared bishop on d2 to defend the e3-pawn and put some pressure on the queenside. It is remarkable that several strong grandmasters including Bent Larsen, a great expert on the flank openings, have hurried to place the bishop on c3, thus removing any argument against Black's natural ....f5-f4.' Marin goes on to discuss the half-open c-file, Black's countermeasures involving ...♗c8-f5, ...♕d8-d7 and ...♗f5-h3, and why 12. a4! is more effective than 12.b4?!.

Such passages are extremely useful, and no chess engine can teach you that, even if you don't recall all the details when the position arises. Since Marin's treatise is split over three volumes, totalling nearly 1200 pages, there is enormous scope for this kind of thing, alongside the more detailed analysis of the sharper lines. I suspect most players could absorb a lot without any need for a chess set, just by browsing through and picking out paragraphs like those. In the publisher's foreword to the series they emphasize this point – 'you do not have to remember everything in an opening book in order to use it. It is our hope that those readers who will find this repertoire too extensive and detailed, will ignore many of the details. Even now that we are grandmasters, we see the bolded moves as what we want to memorize, and the notes as explanations and illustrations'.

In fact in a couple of games I found myself following some of Marin's recommendations by accident – without consciously committing anything to memory, the strong verbal explanation meant that something must have sunk in. Just occasionally though, it would have helped to have a clearer delineation between the recommended repertoire and the parts of the book which were primarily for illustration. For the reasons described above, the inclusion of many full games is of great value, and only the most instructive ones made the cut, but from time to time I still lost sight of the distinction between positions which were really critical, and those which were merely interesting.

If you've even the slightest inclination towards the English Opening, this trio of books is strongly recommended. In his introduction, Marin writes that 'after almost 20 years of research, I have finally found *my* Golden Fleece.' These days a fleece is also an item of clothing, which might not have been quite what Jason and the Argonauts were searching for, but connotations often last longer than meanings so I'm sure his choice of words was no accident. A fleece may be cosy, durable, and never very trendy, but lately I've felt very comfortable trying it on. ■



When someone comes to Gibraltar to play chess, they tend to return. The Tradewise Chess Festival is an event with a great chess atmosphere, where professional and amateur players alike are happy to participate. The weather is excellent for January, the Caleta Hotel offers splendid views of the Mediterranean, the prize fund is stimulating, and one always feels very welcome.

Ladies and Gentlemen, Vasily Ivanchuk!

Ukrainian scores 9 from 10 (2968 performance!) in Gibraltar

MARK HUBA

What could possibly go wrong for Vasily Ivanchuk at the Caleta Hotel after Larissa Dalli, Miss Gibraltar 2010, had picked a black pawn for him at the drawing of lots?

The Gibraltar Masters

Victoria Cmilyte

The unique thing about the Gibraltar Masters is the number of strong female players it attracts. In fact, there is hardly any strong lady player in the world who has not, at one time or another, played in Gibraltar. As for myself, this was already the sixth time that I participated. No other tournament comes close to matching the women's prize-fund, with the first prize being 10,000 pounds, so it is no surprise that the competition to win women's awards is an exciting tournament within a tournament.

Brian Callaghan, the man who has put Gibraltar on the chess map, and who has turned it into one of the best Open Tournaments in the world in record time, has often said that he would like to see a lady player fighting for the win in the tournament overall. There were a few impressive performances by female players over the years, yet no one has come close to actually winning it. One could argue that there is only one woman player in the world capable of winning an event of this level, but as everyone knows she doesn't play Open Tournaments, and gave up playing women a very long time ago.

From the female player's perspective, the Gibraltar Masters is a rare chance to play against very strong opposition. Having participated a lot in 'women only' events, I generally dislike the concept of 'women's chess', and the somewhat condescending attitude towards female players from some of their male counterparts. While practice has shown that women chess players have more difficulties reaching the very top, various research suggests that there are no objective reasons why women should be weaker. One of the problems could be limiting oneself to playing in women events only.

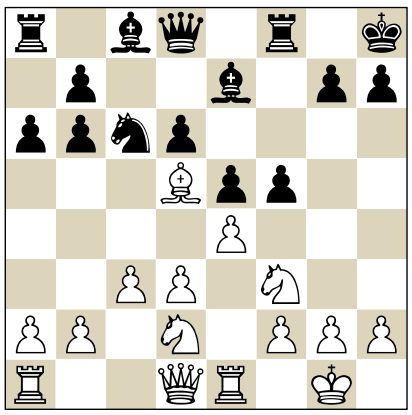
Twenty years ago, there were very few female players in the world with the GM title. In recent years, the number has risen dramatically, and many, including myself, completed their norms in Gibraltar. This year it was Salome Melia from Georgia who earned her first GM norm, and Nadezhda Kosintseva from Russia who got her third norm and consequently the title. As the level of women players grows, it will become more and more likely that the title of WGM will become obsolete. It is peculiar that a tournament like Gibraltar, which offers separate women's prizes, might ultimately contribute to such prizes be-

Fabiano Caruana (18) - Viktor Kortchnoi (79): more than two generations apart.

ing unnecessary. But that remains to be seen.

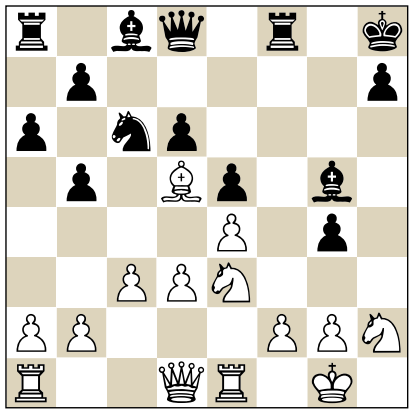
The 9th Gibraltar Masters was the strongest ever, with over 50 GMs and 6 of the 10 of the world's top-rated women participating. An impressive field, that could, in fact, have been even more so, as Hou Yifan, the reigning world champion, who had planned to come, had had to cancel at the last moment. With Ivanchuk as top seed, and the field including Michael Adams, Nigel Short, Fabiano Caruana, Paco Vallejo and the two women ex-world champions Antoaneta Stefanova and Zhu Chen, it promised to be an exciting event.

Due to the accelerated pairing system, the second round already saw GMs playing each other. One of the most memorable games of the tournament was played in that round, when the legendary Viktor Kortchnoi beat Fabiano Caruana, number 25 in the world and 61 years his junior. It is virtually impossible to find any other sport in which two players more than two generations apart could compete on equal terms. Here is the position after White's 13th move:

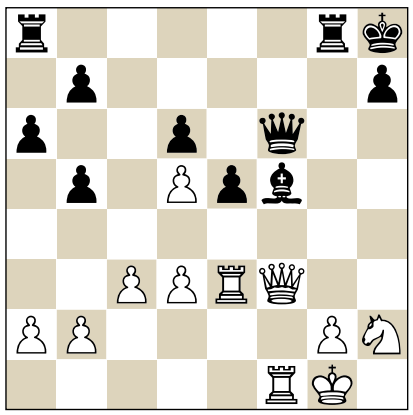


Caruana-Kortchnoi
position after 13.♗d5

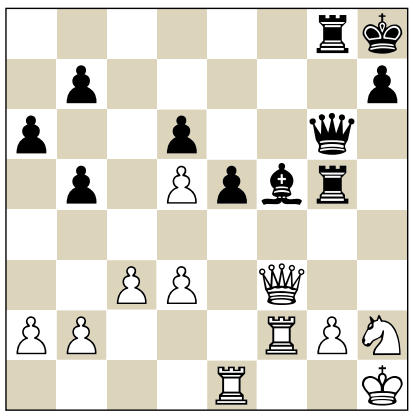
Caruana managed to get an unbalanced position after the opening, possibly hoping to outplay his opponent in a complex battle. Kortchnoi, however, shows that he is up to the challenge, and that the position is about much more than a weak square on d5 and a crippled pawn structure: **13...g5!** An energetic and concrete solution. **14.h3** The position is very complex. White could have tried 14.♘c4, vacating the d2-square for the other knight: 14...g4 15.♘fd2 f4 16.a4!?, allowing no weaknesses on the kingside, and attacking b6. Still, by playing aggressively on the kingside Black would have maintained excellent counterchances. **14...g4 15.hxg4 fxg4 16.♘h2 ♗g5 17.♘c4 b5 18.♘e3**



18...♗xe3!? An interesting decision. Black gives up his bishop pair, but gains time to mobilize his forces. **19.♖xe3 ♕f6 20.♕e1 ♘e7 21.f3** A principled move; White is trying to break Black's structure. Once again, Kortchnoi reacts energetically. **21...♘xd5 22.exd5 ♖g8 23.♕g3 gxf3 24.♕xf3 ♗f5 25.♖f1**



25...♖g5! A multipurpose move: covering f5, preparing to double rooks on the g-file, and getting ready to play on the h-file after ...♕h6. **26.♔h1 ♕h6 27.♖f2 ♖ag8 28.♖e1?** Now White is on the verge of losing. 28.♔g1, with the idea of bringing the ♘h2 back to life via f1, was necessary. **28...♕g6**



I generally dislike the concept of 'women's chess', and the somewhat condescending attitude towards female players from some of their male counterparts.

29.♖e3? Now Black's win is only a matter of time. 29.♘f1 was White's last hope, when after 29...♗xd3 30.♘e3 he would still have chances to save the game. **29...♗xd3! 30.♔g1 e4 31.♕h3 ♖xd5** Kortchnoi picks up the two central pawns, keeping his grip on the position. His opponent fights on for a while, but to no avail. **32.♕d7 ♖g5 33.g4 ♕h6 34.♖f7 ♖5g7 35.♖xg7 ♖xg7 36.♕d8+ ♖g8 37.♕b6 ♕f6 38.♕xb7 ♖f8 39.♕a7 b4 40.♖h3 ♕g7 41.♕e3 bxc3 42.bxc3 ♕xc3 43.♖h5 d5 44.g5 ♕a1+ 45.♔g2 ♗f1+ 46.♔g3 ♕e5+** White resigned.

This year's Masters was marked by two fantastic performances. Nigel Short had a brilliant start with 5 out of 5, beating three ladies along the way, which earned him the name of 'ladykiller'. He was only stopped by top seed Vasily Ivanchuk in the sixth round. But it was a close thing. Nigel Short ended on 8½, a result which would have been enough to win any of the previous editions. But not this year, as Vasily Ivanchuk scored a stunning 9 out of 10, with a performance of 2968.

In the 'women's competition', it was a close race until the very end. Before the last round IM Salome Melia from Georgia was leading four players by half a point. She made a draw with black against Gopal, but this wasn't enough, as her compatriot Nana Dzagnidze beat Sasikiran (also with black!) to catch up on points and claim the top women's prize on performance. According to the tournament rules, there can only be one sole winner, and performance is used as a tiebreak, which in Nana's case was 2672. She also ended sixth in the overall classification. Gibraltar must be one of Nana's favourite tournaments, as it's the second time in three years that she claimed the top women's prize. Here is the winner's impressive victory against one of the top seeds, Paco Vallejo.

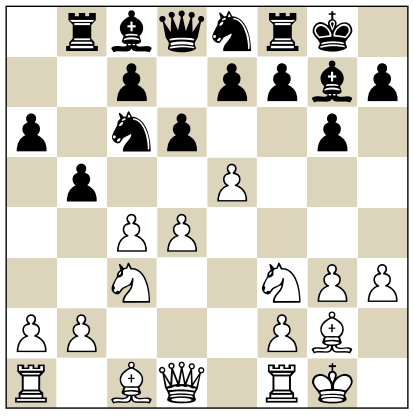
NOTES BY
Nana Dzagnidze

KI 70.5 – E63
Nana Dzagnidze
Paco Vallejo
Gibraltar 2011 (6)

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.♘c3 ♗g7 4.g3 0-0 5.♗g2 d6 6.♘f3 ♘c6 7.0-0 a6 8.e4
There are many other interesting options here, such as 8.b3 and 8.e3, and a few weaker ones.
8...♖b8
The usual reaction here is 8...♗g4!?, for example 9.♗e3 ♘d7 10.♘e2 ♘a5 11.♖c1 c5 12.b3 ♘c6 13.d5 ♘b4 14.a3 ♘d3, with a very complicated position, which was tried in a few of Bologan's games.
9.h3
This moves leads to a transposition to the main line.
Also possible was 9.d5 ♘a5 10.♕e2 (in this position the Norwegian grandmaster Jon Ludvig Hammer tried the extremely interesting pawn sacrifice 10.c5 dxc5 11.e5) 10...c5 11.e5 ♘e8 12.♗f4.
9...b5 10.e5 ♘e8
A rare and rather passive move.
The main line goes 10...dxe5 11.dxe5 ♕xd1 12.♖xd1 ♘d7 13.e6 fxe6 14.cxb5 axb5 15.♗f4. The main problem for Black is that he has little hope

Girls, girls, girls (and Stuart Conquest). Who wouldn't want to be a tournament director with Natalia Pogonina, Salome Melia, Natalia Zhukova, Inna Gaponenko, Victoria Cmilyte and Yerazik Khachatourian around?

of creating real counterplay. Black's dream here is a draw.



11.♘g5

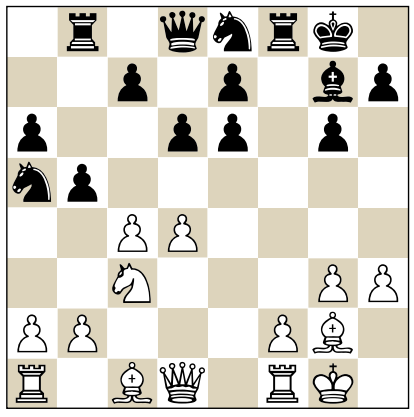
A very aggressive approach. This move I invented over the board, as at this point my theoretical knowledge had come to an end.

Bent Larsen won two games in 1958 with 11.♕e2. The main line is 11.cxb5 axb5 12.♗f4, with a very solid white centre.

11...♘a5 12.e6 ♗xe6

I think that capturing the other way would have been better: 12...fxe6 13. cxb5 axb5 14.♖e1 b4 15.♘e2 h6 16. ♘f3 ♖f6 17.♘f4, with sufficient compensation for the pawn.

13.♘xe6 fxe6



14.c5!?

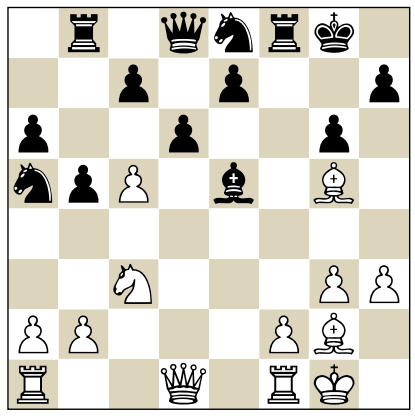
There was a simpler way, that looks very strong: 14.cxb5 axb5 15.b4 ♘c4 16.a4 bxa4 17.♕e2.

14...e5

A better option may have been 14... dxc5 15.dxc5 ♗xc3 16.bxc3 ♕xd1 17. ♖xd1 ♖f5 18.♖d7 ♔f7 19.♗e3 ♘c4 20.g4 ♖e5 21.♗d4 ♖e2, and Black may hold.

15.dxe5 ♗xe5 16.♗g5

This developing move is the right choice, as other moves, such as 16.a4 b4 17.♘e4 or 16.♕e2, are weaker.



16...♘c4

Here it was necessary to try a more aggressive and riskier approach: 16...♖f5 17.h4 ♗xc3 18.bxc3 ♖xc5 19.a4.

17.♘d5

It was possible to simply develop pieces with 17.♗h6 ♘g7 18.♕e2, but I wanted to create more concrete threats.

17...♘f6

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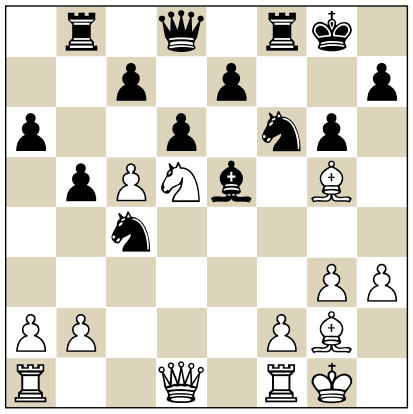
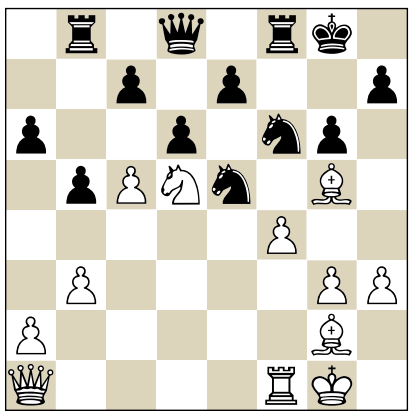


18.b3!! I think that this was the only way to create real problems for my opponent. Although the computer programs don't recognize it at first, they later start to understand the idea behind this move.

18...♗xa1 19.♕xa1 ♘e5 20.f4



20...♘d3?

This move upsets the harmony between the black pieces. It was clearly better to keep them protecting each other. Black had to play 20...♘ed7, when after 21.♖e1 ♖f7 White would probably choose 22.♘b4 ♖c8 23.♗d5 c6 24.♘xc6 ♖xc6 25.♗xc6 ♕c8 26.♗g2 ♕xc5+ 27.♔h2, with serious compensation for the pawn, as the white bishops control a lot of space.

21.c6!

Once again I think that this is the best move, even though the programmes don't give it as the main line. Without open files the black rooks are passive.

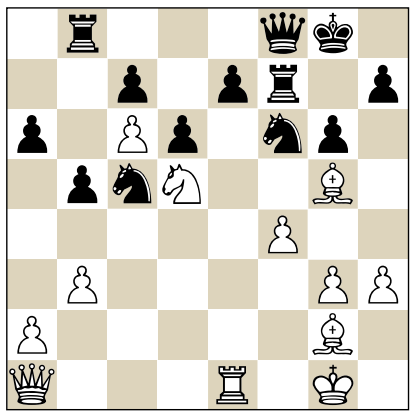
21...♖f7

21...a5 would not change anything after 22.a3!.

22.♖d1

There was no real difference, but here Steel Brain's recommendation of 22.♕d4 ♘c5 23.♖e1 is equally strong.

22...♘c5 23.♖e1 ♕f8 Now simple tactics demonstrate the magnificent centralization of White's pieces.



24.♖xe7! ♖xe7

Slightly better was 24...♘e8 25.b4 h6 26.♖xf7 ♕xf7 27.bxc5 hxg5 28.cxd6 cxd6 29.fxg5 ♕g7 30.♕b1, but here, too, Black is unable to defend against the powerful white pieces.

25.♘xf6+ ♔f7 26.♗d5+ ♘e6 27.♘d7 ♕h8 28.♗f6 ♕g8 29.♗xe7 ♔xe7 30.♕f6+ Black resigned.

■■■

As for myself, the start of the tournament exceeded all my expectations. In Rounds 2 and 3 I beat Kiril Georgiev and Emanuel Berg and for a brief moment found myself sharing first place together with Nigel Short, Nadezhda Kosintseva and Deep Sengupta. However, starting with my fourth round game against Nadezhda, the tables were turned completely, and I duly went on to lose three games in a row. I ended up at 6 points, the only remarkable thing about my tournament being that I made no draws. A dubious record, as draws are not only one of the most criticized components of a chess game, but also a sign of solid and stable play.

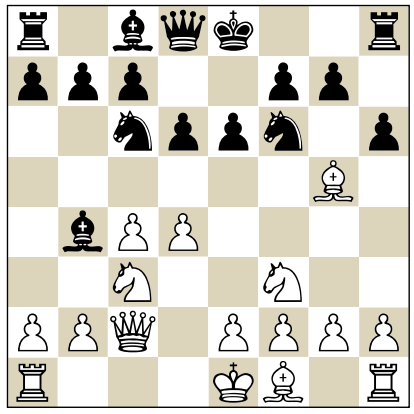
While preparing for my game against Kiril Georgiev, I was not sure which opening he would go for. Recently, a widely publicized research paper stated that male grandmasters tend to play overly aggressively against good-looking women. One can understand my disappointment, when Kiril chose the solid Nimzo...

NI 24.10 – E33
Victoria Cmilyte
Kiril Georgiev
Gibraltar 2011 (2)

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘c3 ♗b4 4.♕c2 ♘c6

A rare but perfectly sound line.

5.♘f3 d6 6.♗g5 h6



7.♗xf6

Not the best move. 7.♗d2 is more natural, keeping the bishop.

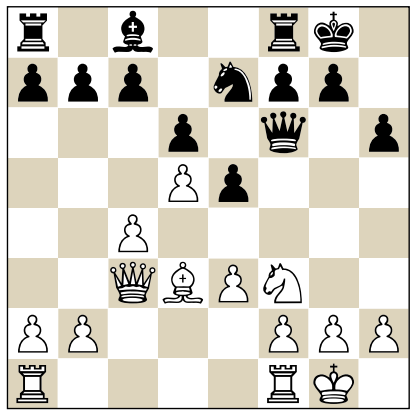
7...♕xf6 8.e3 0-0 9.♗d3 e5 10.d5

10.0-0 ♗xc3 11.bxc3, followed by ♘d2 and f4, was an interesting option, when the doubled c3 pawn effectively supports White's centre.

10...♘e7

10...♘b8 seems better to me, as in the game Black's pieces lacked harmony: 11.0-0 ♗xc3 12.♕xc3 ♕e7 13.♘d2 a5, and Black has a perfectly sound position.

11.0-0 ♗xc3 12.♕xc3



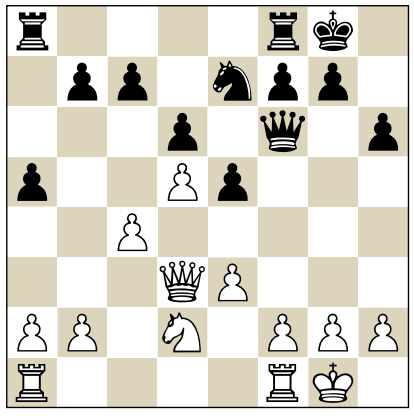
12...♗f5

If 12...a5 then 13.♘d2 was possible, threatening ♘e4 and highlighting Black's coordination problems, as 13...♘g6 is strongly met by 14.f4!.

13.♘d2!?

Kiril tries to tempt me to play e4, when despite the extra space, there is a risk of me ending up with a bad bishop. I wanted to keep the e4-square available for my knight.

13...♗xd3 14.♕xd3 a5



15.♕c3!?

An interesting move. Instead of playing for the standard c5, I am aiming for f4, exploiting the fact that Black's queen and knight lack coordination, and ideally would like to switch places.

15...♕f5 16.♖ae1

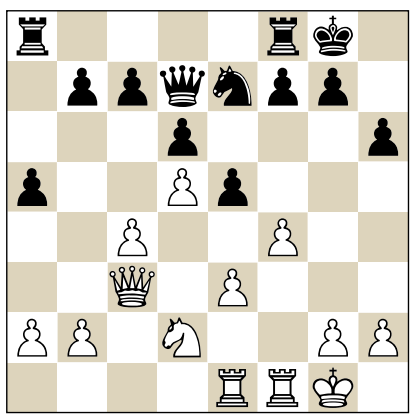
Keeping my options open. I wasn't too happy about 16.e4, as it seemed to me that after 16...♕g5 17.g3 (17.c5 ♘g6 18.g3 – forced, else Black has ...♘f4, but now, due to the knight hanging on d2, 18...dxc5! is possible) 17...b6 Black would have a comfortable position.

16...♕d7

16...b6 was a good alternative.

17.f4

I had had this idea for a while, and it seemed like the proper moment to play it. My impression was that this move came as a surprise to my opponent, and he didn't react in the best way.

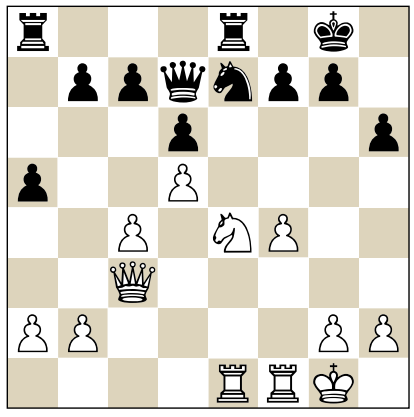


17...exf4?!

17...f6 was better. Now 18.fxe5 (18.♕d3!?, taking control of the white squares, preparing to double the rooks on the f-file and put the knight on e4, would keep Black under pressure) 18...fxe5 19.♖xf8+ ♔xf8 leads to an equal position.

18.exf4 ♖fe8 19.♘e4

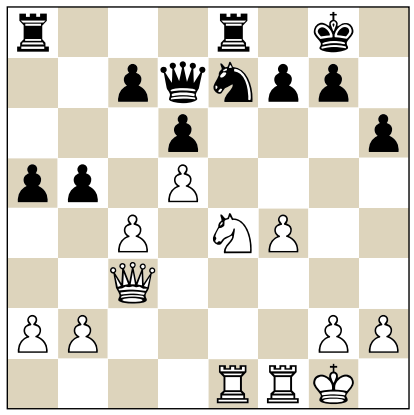
It seems to me that Kiril underestimated the dangers of this position. Suddenly all of White's pieces are working.



19...c6?!

Black's position looks solid, but stopping f5-f6 is not easy, as the tactics work in White's favour. In case of the prophylactic 19...f6 20.♘g3 ♘f5 21.♘h5!? with the idea of g4 looks promising for White.

Black should have struck with 19...b5, making White's centre vulnerable:



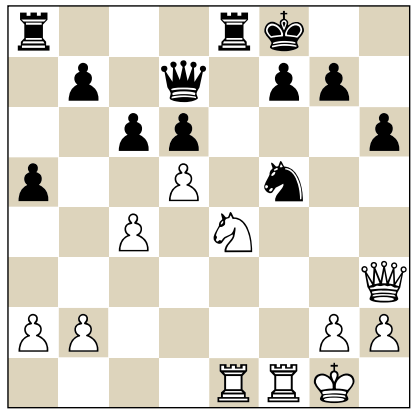
ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

20.f5 (20.b3 doesn't work that well here, as after 20...bxc4 21.bxc4 c6 Black will always have an important additional check on a7, as compared to the game) 20...f6! (20...bxc4 is bad in view of 21.f6 ♘xd5 22.♕g3 g6 23.♕h4 ♖xe4 24.♖xe4 ♔h7 25.♖f3) and now it seems White has nothing better than 21.b3 bxc4 22.bxc4 ♘xf5 23.♕h3 ♖e5 24.♘xf6+ gxf6 25.♖xe5 fxe5 26.♖xf5 ♕g7, when White is only marginally better.

20.♕g3 ♔f8 21.f5!

Threatening f6. Since d6 is also weak, Black has no choice but to take.

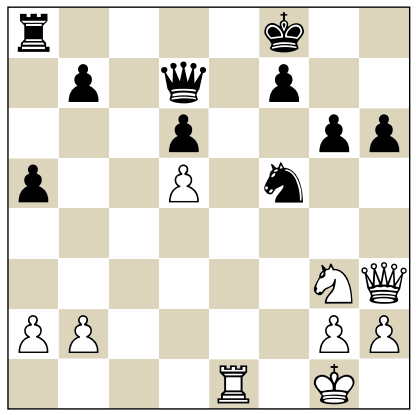
21...♘xf5 22.♕h3



22...cxd5

The immediate 22...♖e5 is worse, as after 23.♘g3 ♖xe1 24.♖xe1 g6 25.♖f1 ♕e7 26.♘xf5 gxf5 27.♕xh6+ ♔g8 28.h4 the position is very similar to the game, but having the c-file blocked takes away Black's counterplay and White is close to winning.

23.cxd5 ♖e5 24.♘g3 ♖xe1 25.♖xe1 g6



26.♖f1!

This was my point. Now I win back the pawn, keeping serious pressure.

26.♘xf5?! was worse, as after 26...♕xf5 27.♕xh6+ ♔g8 White's initiative evaporates.

26...♕e7

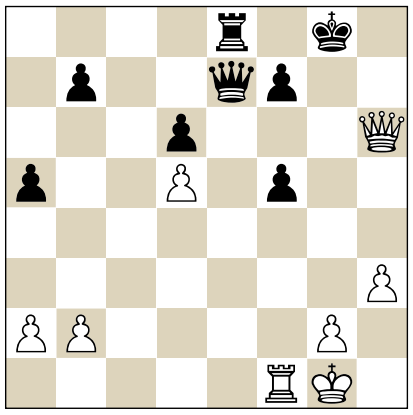
After 26...♔g7 27.♖xf5! was possible (27.♘xf5+ gxf5 28.♖xf5 is also better for White): 27...gxf5 28.♘xf5+. The king has no choice but to advance to the centre, as other moves would lose

the queen: 28...♔f6 29.♕xh6+ ♔e5 30.♕e3+, and although there is no forced win, White has huge practical chances.

27.♘xf5 gxf5 28.♕xh6+ ♔g8 29.h3

Too timid. 29.h4 was stronger, according to the computer.

29...♖e8



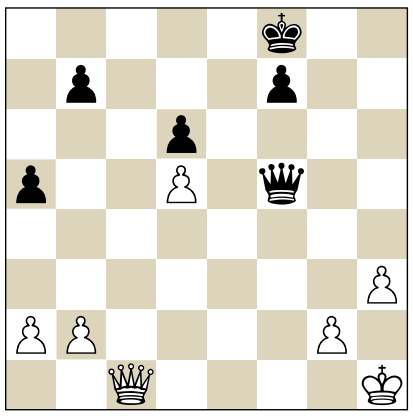
30.♔h1

I wasn't sure about the endgame after 30.♖xf5 ♕e3+ 31.♕xe3 ♖xe3 32.♖f3 ♖e5. My opponent being a well known endgame expert, I felt that his chances to make a draw would be much higher than my chances to win.

30...♕e5 31.♖f3 ♖c8 32.♕g5+ ♔f8 33.♖xf5 ♖c1+

33...♕xb2 34.♔h2!, and the difference in king safety is decisive.

34.♕xc1 ♕xf5



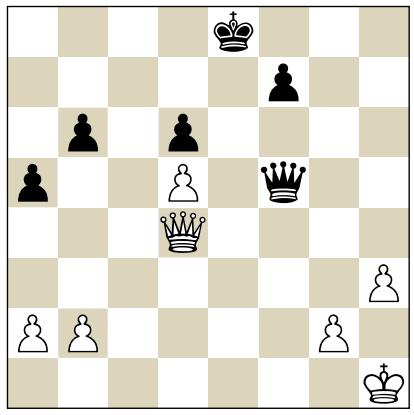
White is a pawn up, and defending as Black is not an easy task. The following queen manoeuvres can be explained as caused by time-trouble, as well as by the search for the optimal square from where it could both defend the king from checks and support the advance of the h-pawn.

35.♕h6+ ♔e7 36.♕h4+ ♔d7

MARK HUBA

Recently, a widely publicized research paper stated that male grandmasters tend to play overly aggressively against good-looking women. One can understand my disappointment, when Kiril chose the solid Nimzo...

37.♕a4+ ♔e7 38.♕b5 b6 39.♕e2+ ♔f8 40.♕d1 ♕f2 41.♕c1 ♕f5 42.♕h6+ ♔e7 43.♕h4+ ♔e8 44.♕d4



44...b5?!

44...♕b1+ was probably enough for a draw. During the game I assumed that taking on a2 is risky, as it gives me time to advance the h3 pawn. But after 45.♔h2 ♕xa2 46.h4 ♕b1 47.♕xb6 ♕e4 Black is in time to activate his queen.

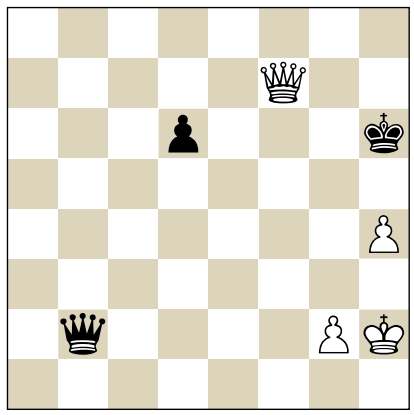
45.♔h2 b4 46.h4 ♔f8 47.a3 ♔g8

47...bxa3 48.bxa3 ♔g8 was better, as it's not obvious how White can progress.

48.axb4 axb4 49.♕d2 ♔h7 50.♕xb4 ♕e5+ 51.♔h3 ♕xd5 52.♕f4 ♕b3+

Black must liquidate b2 before it becomes too dangerous.

53.♔h2 ♕xb2 54.♕xf7+ ♔h6



55.♔h3!?

At this point I had the chance to win the d6 pawn in various ways. However, I could distinctly remember the game Nepomniachtchi-Anand, which I witnessed in Mainz 2009, where the World Champion also had the h- and g-pawns but couldn't win. Nepom-

niachtchi must have been inspired by John Nunn's article in New In Chess 2005/6. Back then, the game made a big impression on me, as I could hardly believe that there was no win in a position with two healthy extra pawns. Indeed, after 55.♕f4+ ♔h7 56.♕xd6 the Nalimov Endgame Tablebase confirms that the position is drawn. The main defensive ideas being a perpetual and (if White manages to advance the pawns) stalemate.

The text-move gives White practical chances. And while objectively the position should be a draw, the d6 pawn obstructs Black's queen, and he has to play very accurately.

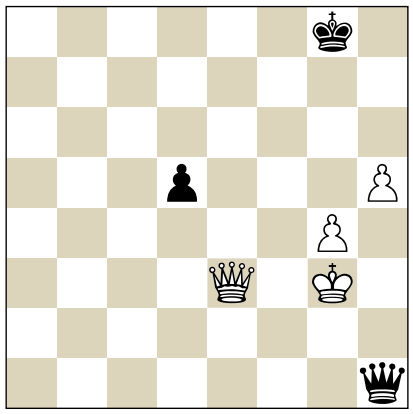
55...♕c3+ 56.♕f3 ♕e5 57.g3

Black would like to advance his pawn, but there's no time, as White is threatening to exchange queens.

57...♔g7 58.♕f4 ♕d5 59.♕e3 ♔h7?

The passive strategy doesn't work. 59... ♕d1 was necessary, preparing the advance of the d-pawn, which might have been enough for a draw.

60.g4 ♔g8 61.h5 ♕h1+ 62.♔g3 d5

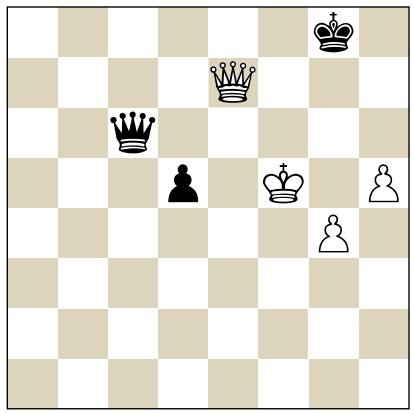


63.♕e8+? This leads nowhere. 63.h6 was winning easily: 63... ♕a1 64.g5, and Black can do nothing to stop the pawns. The queen's position on e3 is perfect, protecting the king from the checks and supporting the advance of the two pawns. Black is helpless.

63...♔g7 64.♕g6+ ♔h8 65.♕e8+ ♔g7 66.♕e7+ ♔g8 67.♔f4?

This allows a perpetual. I could still have gone back: 67.♕e3!.

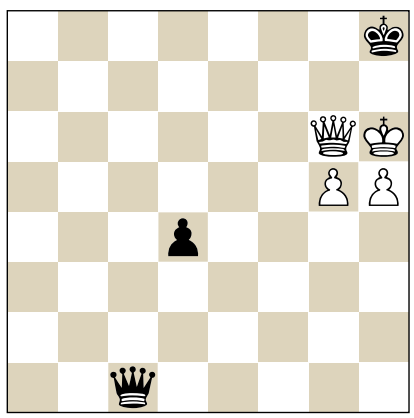
67...♕f1+ 68.♔g5 ♕c1+ 69.♔g6 ♕c6+ 70.♔f5



70...♕c8+?

The pressure of a long game takes its toll. Now White is winning again. 70... ♕c2+ was the right check, not allowing the king to escape.

71.♔f4 ♕c1+ 72.♕e3 ♕c4+ 73.♔g5 d4 74.♕e8+ ♔h7 75.♕g6+ ♔h8 76.♔h6 ♕c1+ 77.g5



Black resigned. Had it not been for the d4 pawn, Black would have drawn with ...♕xg5+. As it is, he won't be able to avoid getting mated.

During the seventh round the lights suddenly went out in the Caleta Hotel due to a power failure in big parts of Gibraltar. It took slightly more than an hour for the electricity to be restored. Curiously enough, most of the people still playing didn't seem to mind the enforced break too much. There was an almost cheerful atmosphere, as the players were chatting, waiting for the light to come back. For obvious reasons the arbiters asked everyone not to go to their rooms. Some went to have a candlelit dinner in the restaurant downstairs. It turned out that those players who were using the MonRoi device were in luck. Not only can it be used for noting down one's game and playing online, in case of an electric failure it is also a torch!

Stuart Conquest, the tournament director, made sure that things ran smoothly throughout the event. During the previous eight editions Stuart had been the commentator in Gibraltar, and this year was his first as tournament director. He did a great job, at all times taking care that players were happy and comfortable.

Brian announced that next year's jubilee edition will be special and read out the confirmation email from none other than Judit Polgar.

At the closing ceremony, Brian Callaghan thanked chess legend Viktor Kortchnoi and his wife Petra for coming to Gibraltar and wished fast and full recovery to the 10th World Champion Boris Spassky, who was a special guest at last year's edition and recently suffered a stroke. His words met with a standing ovation from the audience. Brian announced that next year's jubilee edition will be special and read out the confirmation email from none other than Judit Polgar. With such an impressive reinforcement, the chances of a lady player winning Gibraltar Masters next year will be higher than ever.

NOTES BY
Vasily Ivanchuk

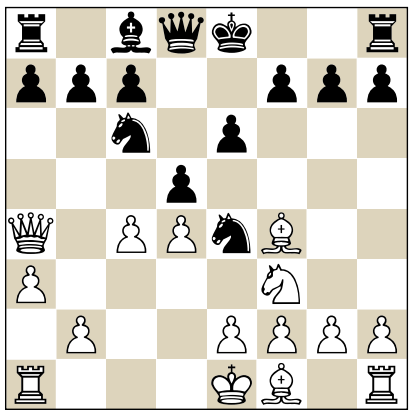
QI 1.10 – A40
Vasily Ivanchuk
Nigel Short
Gibraltar 2011 (6)

My games with Nigel have always been tense. At the given moment he was leading with 5 out of 5 in the tournament, and so I needed to win – I was half a point behind.

1.d4 e6 2.c4 ♗b4+ 3.♘d2

A rare move, leading to a complicated game.

3...d5 4.♘f3 ♘f6 5.♕a4+ ♘c6 6. a3 ♗xd2+ 7.♗xd2 ♘e4 8.♗f4



8...g5!? The idea of playing g5 after castling deserves consideration: 8...0-0 9.e3 (I think that 9.g3 ♗d7 10.♕c2 is better) 9...g5 10.♗g3 h5!?, with the initiative for Black.

9.♗e3 f5

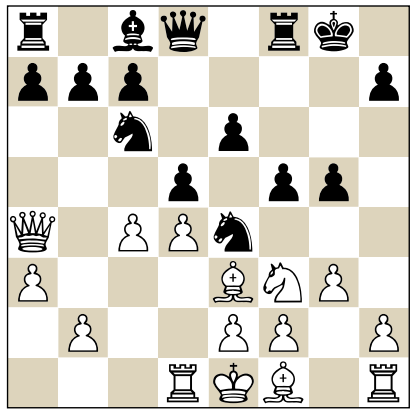
The advance of the g-pawn would not have brought any significant benefit: 9...g4 10.♘d2 ♘xd2 11.♗xd2.

10.g3!?

In an old game there followed 10.♘e5?! ♗d7! 11.♘xd7 ♕xd7 12.f3 f4 13.♗g1 ♘d6 14.e4 fxe3 15.♗xe3 dxc4 16.♗xc4 ♘xc4 17.♕xc4 ♖g8 18.0-0-0 0-0-0 19.♖he1 g4 20.♗f4 gxf3 21. gxf3 ♖g6 with good play for Black, Malaniuk-Salov, 54th USSR Championship, Minsk 1987.

10...0-0 11.♖d1

11.♗g2 looks weaker because of 11...f4! 12.gxf4 gxf4 13.♗d2 ♘xd2 14.♔xd2 ♕f6 15.♖hg1 ♔h8, and the white king is under fire.



11...♔h8?!

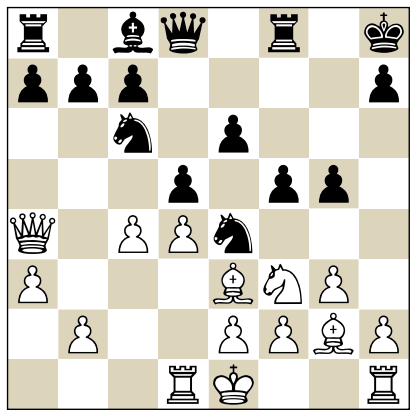
Preparing the thematic f5-f4, but this move is by no means the best. The loss of tempi in such positions can cost dearly. I have looked at several alternatives.

11...♕f6 is a logical move, the only drawback being that White has the possibility of opening up the kingside with 12.h4!

To me the natural move seemed to be the developing 11...♗d7.

12.♗g2

12.h4 is dubious: 12...f4 13.gxf4 gxf4 14.♗c1 ♗d7 15.♕c2 ♕f6 and it is completely unclear how White can develop his pieces.



12...f4?!

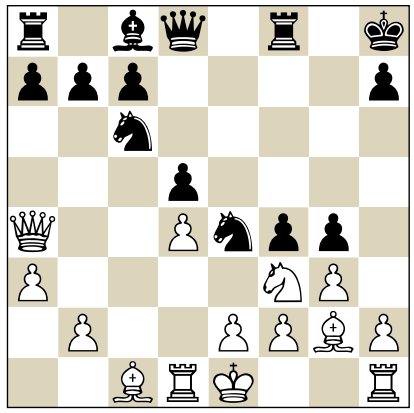
Black somewhat overrates his possibilities. This attack is not altogether prepared and is easily parried.

The alternative was 12...♕e7.

13.♗c1 g4

Even so, Black should have called a halt: 13...♕e7 14.♕c2 ♕g7 15.gxf4 gxf4 16.♖g1 ♘d6 17.b3, although he has problems finding moves, for example 17...♗d7 18.♗h3 ♕e7 19.♘e5 ♖g8 20.♖f1 and Black's position is under pressure.

14.cxd5 exd5



15.♘e5!

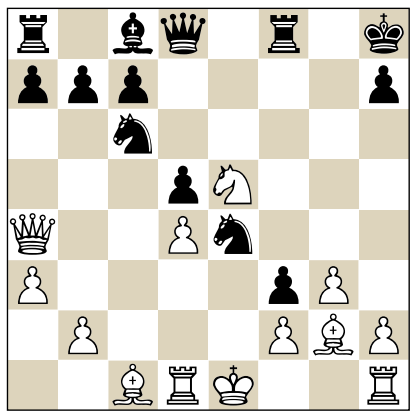
This move came as a surprise to my opponent. Black's apparent activity is no more than a myth. Unexpectedly the white pieces become very active.

15...f3

After 15...fxg3 16.hxg3 ♘xf2 17.♗f4!! (a spectacular move; 17.♘g6+ ♔g7 18.♘xf8 ♘xh1 19.♗xh1 ♔xf8 20. ♗h6+ ♔f7 21.♕c2 is also not bad) 17...♘xh1 18.♘xc6 bxc6 19.♗e5+ ♔g8 20.♕xc6 ♖f7 21.♗xd5 the white bishops are completely dominant!

Apparently Black overlooked the following: 15...♘xe5 16.dxe5 f3 17.exf3 gxf3 18.♗xf3 ♖xf3 19.♕xe4! (a surprise!) 19...dxe4 20.♖xd8+ ♔g7 21. ♗g5 and wins.

16.exf3 gxf3



17.♗xf3!

Even better than 17.♘xf3 ♗g4 18. ♖d3 ♕d7 19.0-0 ♖f6 20.♘e5 ♘xe5 21.♕xd7 ♘xd7 22.f3 ♗xf3 23.♖dxf3 ♖xf3 24.♗xf3 with a white advantage.

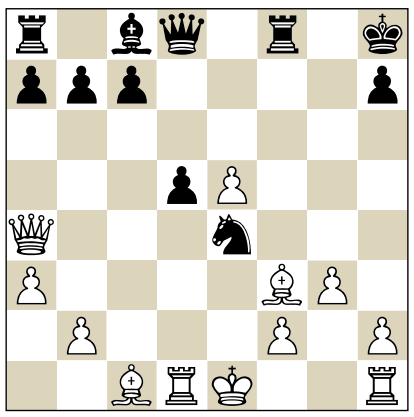
17...♘xe5

17...♖xf3 18.♘xf3 ♗g4 does not work in view of 19.♕b3! (19.♘e5 ♘xe5 20.dxe5 ♕f8) 19...♘a5 20.♕d3 ♕e8 21.0-0 ♕h5 22.♘e5 ♗xd1 23.♖xd1

Vasily Ivanchuk watches Nigel Short's reaction to his rare third move.

with a clear advantage for White.

18.dxe5



18...♘c5

18...♗d7 also does not help: 19.♕b3 ♗a4 20.♕xa4 ♖xf3 21.0-0 c6 22.♔g2 ♕f8 23.♗e3 ♕f5 24.e6 ♖f8 25.e7 ♖e8 26.♕b4 b6 27.♕a4 and Black's pawn structure disintegrates.

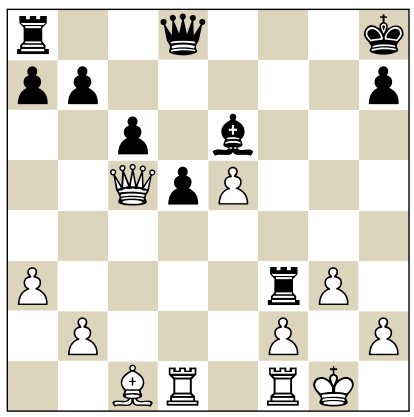
18...♖xf3 is not possible in view of the afore-mentioned 19.♕xe4!.

19.♕d4 ♖xf3

It is too late for 19...c6 20.e6+ ♔g8 21.♕g4+ ♔h8 22.♗d2 winning.

20.♕xc5 c6 21.0-0 ♗e6

The following ending was preferable: 21...♗h3 22.♖fe1 ♕b6 23.♕xb6 axb6 24.♖e3 ♖ff8 25.♖d4, although White is obviously better.



22.♕d6

The exchange on d6 favours White, since he acquires a passed d-pawn, which in addition is an extra pawn.

22.♗e3 is also not bad: 22...♕f8 23.♕xf8+ ♖fxf8 (23...♖axf8 24.♗xa7) 24.♔g2 ♔g7 25.f3 h5 26.h3 followed by g4.

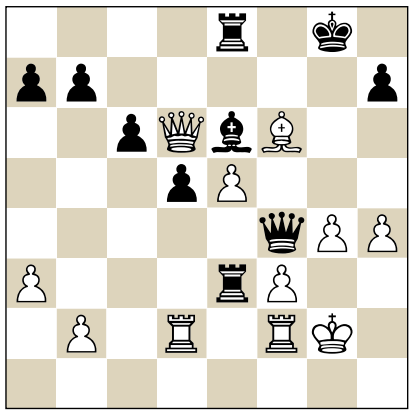
22...♕e8 23.♗g5 ♕f7 24.♗f6+ ♔g8 25.♔g2 ♖b3 26.♖d2 ♖e8 27.f3 ♕g6 28.♖ff2 ♕h6 29.g4

White's position is technically won, and he is faced with the task of converting his advantage. The main way is to transpose into a favourable ending, in which it will be possible to advance the f- and g-pawns. But, of course, with the queens on it is even easier to win – by an attack on the king.

29...♖e3 30.h4

There was a simpler win by 30.♕b4 a5 31.♕a4 (31.♕xb7? ♗xg4!) 31...b5 32.♕d1 ♕g6 33.h3 h5 34.♖d4 ♖c8 35.♕d2.

30...♕f4



31.♕b4?!

I did not want to have to calculate variations, and the endgame should be technically won. There was a simpler win by 31.♕c7 ♗f7 32.♖de2 ♖xe2 33.♖xe2 ♕c4 34.♖f2, with the switching of the queen to the kingside – White would have won easily.

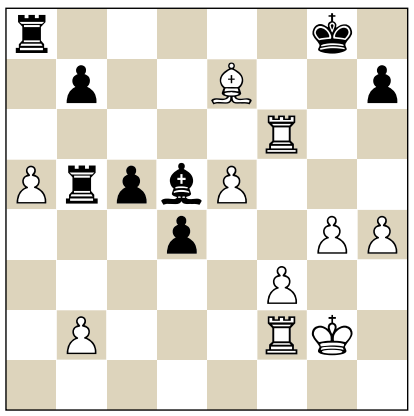
31...♕xb4 32.axb4 ♖b3 33.♖d4 a5?

This weakens the position. 33...♔f7 34.♖fd2 ♗d7 35.♖f4 ♗e6 was better, when there is no good discovery by the bishop. White would have had to engage in lengthy manoeuvring in order to advance his passed pawns.

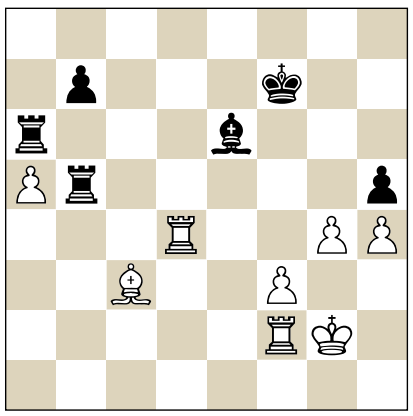
34.bxa5 c5 35.♖a4 ♖a8 36.♗e7 ♖b5 37.♖f4

37.b4! c4 38.♗c5 was strong, when the black pawns are blockaded. For example, White can comfortably transfer his king to d4. However, the move in the game does not throw away the win.

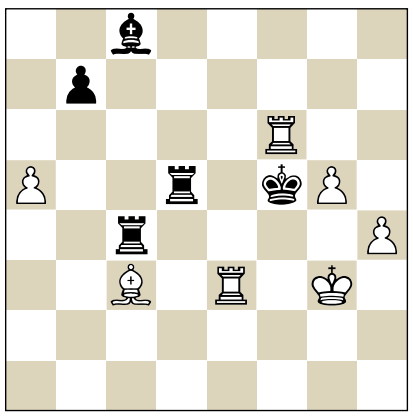
37...d4 38.♖f6 ♗d5



39.♖d6!
After the activation of the white rook, Black is helpless.
39...c4 40.♗d8
An inaccuracy. White could have quickly concluded matters by 40.♔g3! ♖bxa5 41.♗f6 d3 42.♖d7 ♗f7 43.♖e7 (threatening e6) 43...♖e8 44.♖xb7 etc.
40...c3 41.bxc3 dxc3 42.e6 ♗xe6 43.♗f6 ♖a6?
The final mistake. After 43...♖c8 44.♖c2 ♔f7 45.♖xc3 ♖xa5 46.♖e3 ♖e8 White would still have had some work to do, although objectively the position is won.
44.♖d8+ ♔f7 45.♗xc3 h5 46.♖d4



The rest does not require any commentary. All that is required of White is accuracy.
46...♖c6 47.♖f4+ ♔g8 48.♗d2 ♔g7 49.♖e2 ♔g6 50.♔g3 ♖d5 51.♖fe4 ♔f7 52.♖b4 ♗c8 53.♗e1 ♖c1 54.♖be4 ♖cc5 55.♖2e3 ♔g6 56.♗c3 ♖c6 57.♖e7 hxg4 58.fxg4 ♖c4 59.♖g7+ ♔h6 60.g5+ ♔h5 61.♖h7+ ♔g6 62.♖h6+ ♔f5 63.♖f6

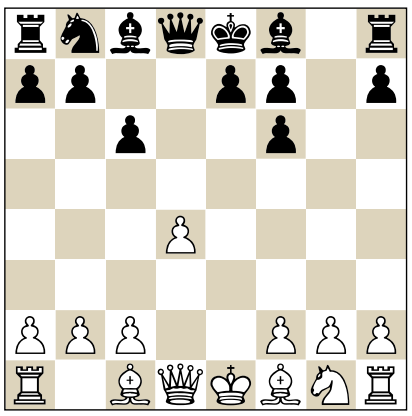


Mate.

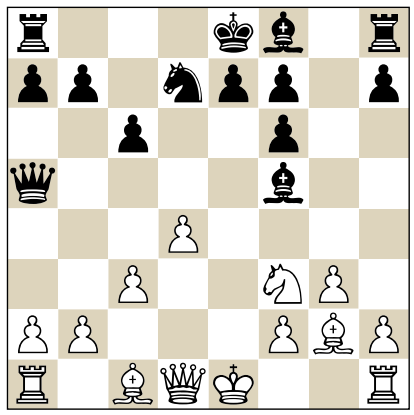
NOTES BY
Nigel Short

CK 7.11 – B16
Geetha Narayanan Gopal
Nigel Short
Gibraltar 2011 (8)

1.e4 c6
I have been making some efforts, of late, to rectify the deficiency of a lamentably narrow repertoire.
2.d4 d5 3.♘c3 dxe4 4.♘xe4 ♘f6 5.♘xf6+ gxf6



The 'Bronstein-Larsen Variation', according to *The Oxford Companion to Chess*. I suppose it gets dull attributing everything to Nimzowitsch who played many, if not most, of the early games in this line. My own awareness of this combative opening dates, at least, back to 1977, when I saw an interesting little article on it in *British Chess Magazine* by Mike Basman. Of even greater inspiration than the words of the manic Armenian muse was to be seated next to Julian Hodgson, in 1979, when he routed the legendary Boris Spassky in a startling 22 moves – albeit in a simul. However being a conservative sort of boy, it was not until 1983 that I ventured it myself – against Maya Chiburdanidze in Dortmund (incidentally one of the numerous catastrophic tournaments that have periodically punctuated my career). I can hardly complain about the theoretical outcome of my game against the Women's World Champion, as I attained a completely winning position after just 14 moves. Unfortunately I then got mated in 28. So great was the trauma of that defeat (oh yes, and the humiliation of losing to a woman – which was a rather rarer occurrence in those days), that I couldn't bring myself to play the opening for another 27 years – a fairly non-eventful draw against Tiviakov in Corus 2010.
6.c3 ♗f5
I dabbled with the extravagant 6...h5!? against Alekseev in Havana last year (a draw), and 6...♕d5 more successfully against Godena in Reggio Emilia this year. However the text move is by far the most common option. It does at least have the merit of developing a piece, which counts for something even in the 21st century...
7.♘f3
7.♘e2!? is, of course, another important option, but it if you are hoping for a recommendation, you can bugger off and analyse it yourself...
7...♘d7 8.g3 ♕a5 9.♗g2
My opponent played this very quickly, not because he had everything worked out (he certainly hadn't, because he sank into very long thought after my reply) but because most players feel entitled to make quick moves in the opening.

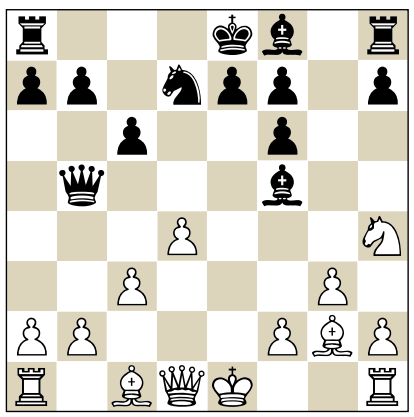


9...♕b5!
In the malapropism of John Lennon, throwing a 'Spaniard' in the works. Later that evening I bumped into Raymond Keene in the lobby who had just returned from a sumptuous and leisurely lunch. Relating the moves to him up to this point Ray immediately commented: 'Your game against Seirawan.' He was right, of course – in-

deed I had briefly examined that encounter, from Melody Amber 1993 – the only occasion when Mr Van Oosterom deigned to let me appear in any of his tournaments – earlier in the morning. What was most interesting, at least from my perspective, was that I had absolutely no recollection of playing it. I would have denied ever seeing it before and had someone told me I was actually responsible for the white moves, I would simply have laughed at him.

10.♘h4

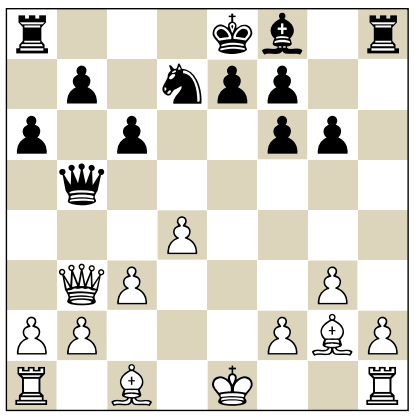
A novelty. 10.a4 ♕d3 11.♕xd3 ♗xd3 12.♗e3 a5 13.0-0-0 ♗e4 14.♘h4 ♗xg2 15.♘xg2 ♘b6 16.b3 ♘d5 17.♗d2 e6 was, allegedly, the continuation of my game with Yasser. I was steadily outplayed from this approximately equal position.



10...♗g6?!

I rejected 10...♗d3 on account of 11.b3 but had failed to spot the pretty tactical trick 11...e5 12.c4 ♕b4+! 13.♗d2 exd4! with advantage. Naturally, White doesn't have to be so obliging, but then 10...♗d3 was clearly the better choice.

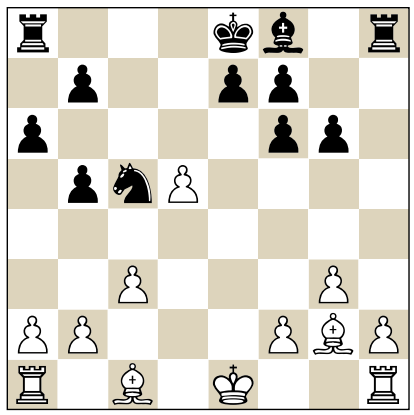
11.♘xg6 hxg6 12.♕b3 a6



13.d5

Played with a thump. I was actually more concerned about 13.♕xb5! axb5 14.d5, activating the bishop, after which White has an edge.

13...♘c5 14.♕xb5 cxb5



Black's pawn structure is rather odd but appearances can be deceptive. Black has a grip on the queenside,

In the malapropism of John Lennon, throwing a 'Spaniard' in the works.

and the white bishop on g2 is going nowhere for the moment. The assessment is therefore approximately equal but in practice easier for Black to play.

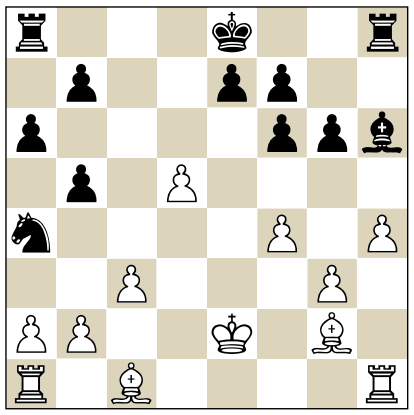
15.♔e2

I expected this, but there is an argument for 15.0-0, defending the h-pawn with the king.

15...♘a4

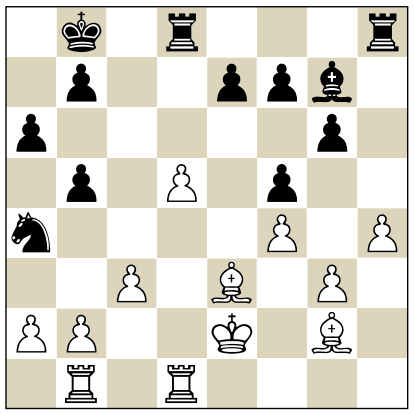
Tying him down to b2.

16.h4 ♗h6 17.f4



17...f5 If I can't exchange the bishop, at least it can be re-routed purposefully.

18.♖b1 ♗g7 19.♗e3 0-0-0 20.♖hd1 ♔b8



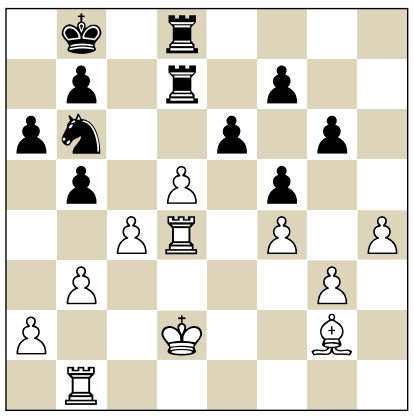
21.♖d3

Given that he changed his mind a few moves later it was perhaps more straightforward for Gopal to play 21.♗d4 directly.

21...♖d7 22.♔d2 ♖c8 23.♗d4 ♗xd4 24.♖xd4 ♘b6 25.b3

Not exactly a mistake, but the simplest way of maintaining the balance was 25.♖e1.

25...♖cd8 26.c4 e6



27.♗f1?!

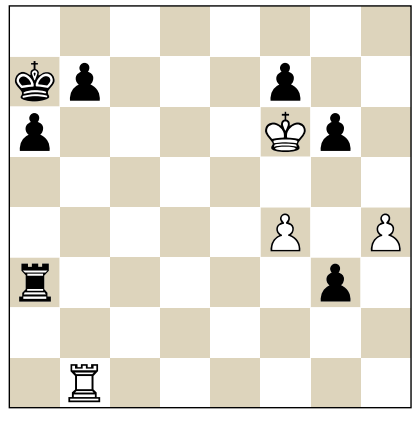
The pressure begins to take its toll. The expenditure of vast amounts of

MARK HUBA

Nigel Short finished in second place. But can you complain if you score 8½ from 10 with a performance rating of 2883?

41.♔g7 b5 42.h5 b4 43.h6 b3 44.h7 ♖c8 45.h8♕ ♖xh8 46.♔xh8 f4 47.♖xg4 f3 48.♖g1 f2 49.♖f1 b2 50.♔g7 a5 51.♔f6 a4 52.♔e5 a3 53.♔d4 a2, but at least I would have been compelled to find some moves. Now it is a piece of cake.

36...fxg4 37.♔f6 g3!



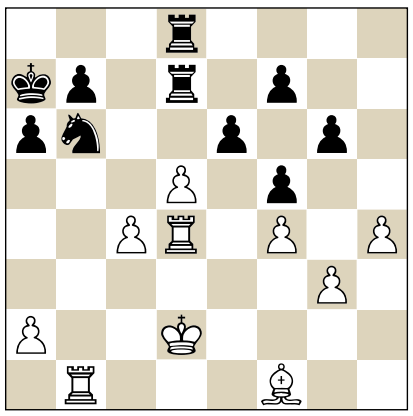
38.♖g1 38.♔xf7 g2 39.♖g1 ♖g3 0-1.

38...♖f3 39.♔g5 a5 40.♔g4 ♖c3 41.f5 a4 42.fxg6 fxg6 43.♔g5 ♖c6 44.♖xg3 b5 White resigned. ■

time earlier on combined with a realization that White's 'pleasant advantage' had been illusory leads to Gopal suddenly cracking.

I had expected 27.♔c3! exd5 28.cxb5 ♖c8+ 29.♔b2 ♖e7, which I imagined was rather unpleasant – particularly when short of time – but the computer is unimpressed. Just 30.♖bd1 and White is fine.

27...bxc4 28.bxc4 ♔a7!



White is dropping a pawn.

29.♗g2?!

It was difficult to make good suggestions but playing for exchanges leads to a lost endgame.

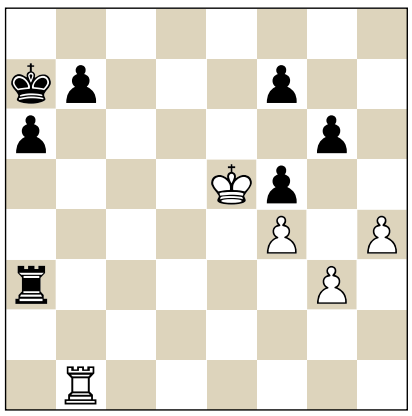
29...exd5 30.cxd5 ♘xd5 31.♗xd5 ♖xd5 32.♖xd5 ♖xd5+ 33.♔e3

33.♔c3 ♖a5 34.♔b3 ♖b5+ wins.

33...♖a5 34.♔d4

34.♖b2 ♖a3+ 35.♔f2 b5 is without any prospects.

34...♖xa2 35.♔e5 ♖a3



36.g4

36.♖g1! would have been a better try. Black wins for example after 36...♖c3 37.♔f6 ♖c7 (37...♖c6+! 38.♔xf7 b5 39.g4 fxg4 40.♖xg4 a5! is easier because Black queens on b1 with check) 38.g4 fxg4 39.f5 ♖c6+ 40.♔xf7 gxf5

Gibraltar 2011

					TB (TPR)
1	Vasily Ivanchuk	IGM	UKR	2764	9	2968
2	Nigel Short	IGM	ENG	2658	8½	2883
3	Kaido Kulaots	IGM	EST	2577	7½	2750
4	Michael Roiz	IGM	ISR	2649	7½	2743
5	Fabiano Caruana	IGM	ITA	2721	7	2681
6	Nana Dzagnidze	IGM	GEO	2550	7	2672
7	Geetha N. Gopal	IGM	IND	2597	7	2651
8	Paco Vallejo	IGM	ESP	2698	7	2648
9	Pentala Harikrishna	IGM	IND	2667	7	2647
10	Kiril Georgiev	IGM	BUL	2669	7	2641
11	Pablo Lafuente	IGM	ARG	2561	7	2637
12	Liviu-D. Nisipeanu	IGM	ROU	2678	7	2629
13	Salome Melia	IM	GEO	2449	7	2610
14	Giorgi Kacheishvili	IGM	GEO	2585	7	2608
15	Viktor Erdos	IGM	HUN	2593	7	2607
16	Vyacheslav Ikonnikov	IGM	RUS	2580	7	2598
17	Viorel Iordachescu	IGM	MDA	2634	7	2538
17	Alexandr Fier	IGM	BRA	2571	7	2538
19	Daniel Fridman	IGM	GER	2655	6½	2695
20	Michael Adams	IGM	ENG	2723	6½	2665
21	Nadezhda Kosintseva	IM	RUS	2552	6½	2654
22	Victor Bologan	IGM	MDA	2693	6½	2623
23	Rainer Buhmann	IGM	GER	2572	6½	2598
24	Victor Mikhalevski	IGM	ISR	2579	6½	2595
25	Varuzhan Akobian	IGM	USA	2618	6½	2583

232 players, 10 rounds

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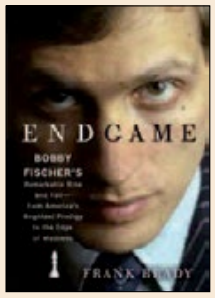

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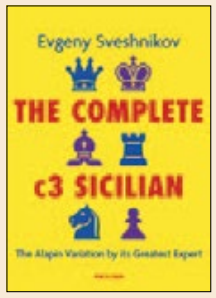

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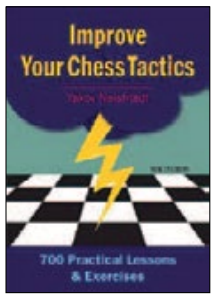

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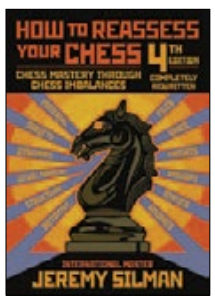

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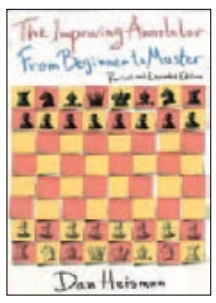

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Charles Hertan

Forcing Moves

Romantics and Technicians

Popular belief holds that before Steinitz, all 19th century players flung their pieces at the enemy king, checkmating or going up in flames; while modern games are won by sophisticated technique. Really? Careful scrutiny reveals that Morphy was a deadly endgame sniper; positional players like Paulsen and Winawer often steered for early endings; and like Tal in modern times, even the fearsome attacker Henry Blackburne mellowed with age, relying more on technique to grind down weaker foes.

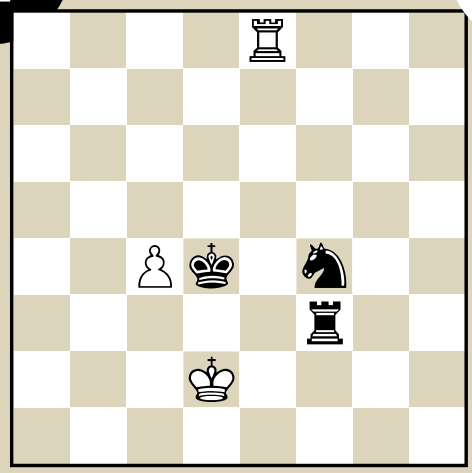
On the other hand, a strong, imaginative tactical flair seems necessary to reach the apex of chess stardom in the new millennium. Precisely *because* grandmaster technique is so refined, a dash of romantic inspiration may distinguish the super-elite.

Bronstein was blasted by the Soviet press in the 1950s for essaying the 'undisciplined' King's Gambit, but nowadays such classical attacks are seen as fertile ground for initiating an imbalanced creative struggle from the outset. Ancient openings like the Scotch Game or the Evans Gambit, refurbished with fresh analysis, become secret weapons in the hands of uncompromizing greats like Kasparov, Anand and Carlsen.

Level of difficulty:
1-4 stars, 1 is 'easiest' and 4 'most difficult'.
The star rating refers to the difficulty of finding all the relevant variations, not just finding the right key move.

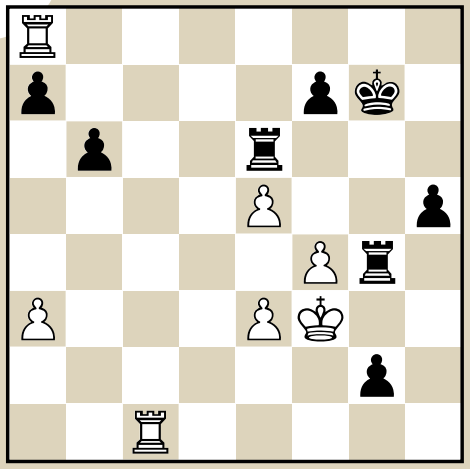
Solutions on page 100

1 ★★★☆



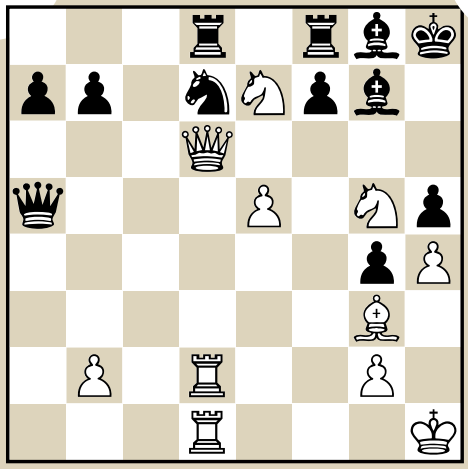
Ensnared
Black to move and win

2 ★★★★



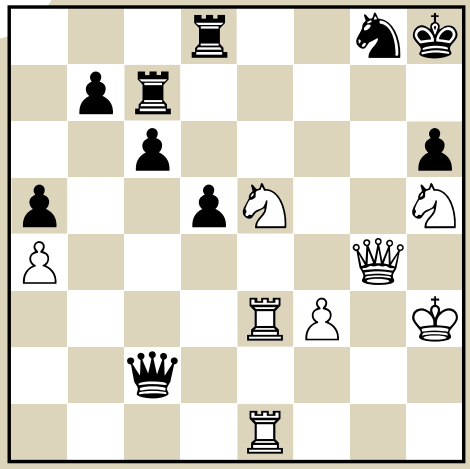
An analytical gold mine; let Fritz rest a while
White to move and draw

3 ★★☆☆



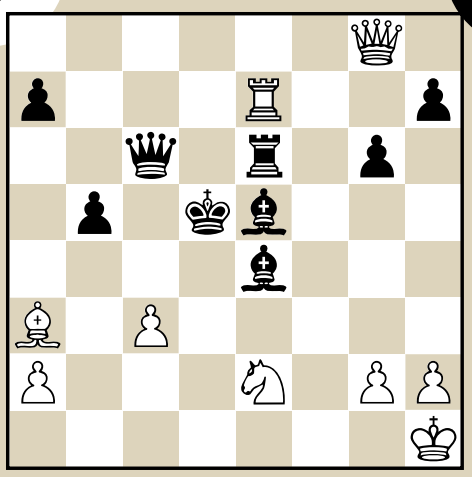
Stroke of genius
White to move and win

4 ★★☆☆



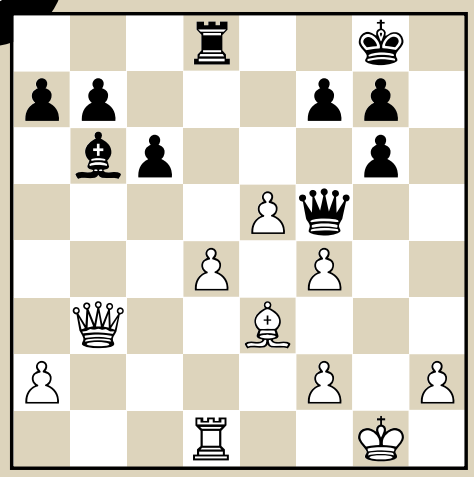
A swashbuckling affair
White to move and win

5 ★★½☆



Modern romance, problem-style
White to move and win

6 ★★½☆



Sharp execution
Black to move and win

Short Stories

French Fraud

Late last year the French Chess Federation dropped a metaphorical bomb-shell by announcing that it had initiated disciplinary action against the national trainer GM Arnaud Hauchard, the Olympiad gold medallist Sebastien Feller, and IM Cyril Marzolo on suspicion of 'organized cheating, serious breach of sport ethics, undermining the image of the national Olympic team, at the World Team Chess Championship that took place in Khanty-Mansyik (sic) (Russia), from September 21 to October 3, 2010.'

Yes, dear greedy gentlemen of FIDE, an extra bale or two of straw does sometimes break the camel's back.

Without wishing to comment on the specifics of this case, or to prejudice the course of legal action, let me say that any organisation that takes stern measures to root out corruption deserves plaudits. This is doubly so when, as in this case – should the charges be eventually proven – a guilty verdict would be to the short-term detriment of the national federation concerned.

While it would perhaps be a slight exaggeration to say that cheating and corruption are rife in chess, it is certainly true that those unscrupulous individuals who have derived dishonest benefit by flouting the rules have hitherto enjoyed near total impunity for their crimes. The fault lies firmly with the governing body FIDE, which possesses neither the capacity, nor the willingness, to address wrongdoing. The paucity-of-probity era was ushered in almost 30 years ago with the election of the late President of FIDE, Florencio Campomanes. Unfortunately, nothing has improved since then. Savvy, astute and urbane the Filipino may well have been, but if the authors of *The KGB Plays Chess* (Gulko, Popov, Felshtinsky and Kortchnoi) are right, he was also a KGB agent who promised unstinting support to a cruel and repressive regime in exchange for a sack of Eastern Bloc votes.

The Campo doctrine, as eloquently expounded to the floor of the FIDE General Assembly in Dresden 2005, long after he held office, was that the primary responsibility for policing corruption belonged to the federations. This sounds pleasingly liberal and plausible until you actually take the trouble to think about its implications. The problem is not only that many federations turn a blind eye to corruption, but that some of them actively collude in or, indeed, orchestrate it. Can you imagine how absurd it would have been for the IOC of the 1980s to say that it was the job of the East German National Olympic Committee to ensure that its athletes did not take steroids? Campo was no fool – he simply never undertook anything that would cost him votes.

To give a little flavour of federational corruption, let me mention a case from a few years ago. Around the turn of the millennium there appeared a sudden sharp spike in the Elo-ratings of most (though not all) of the leading Chinese players. While an increase in strength in young players of a developing nation was only to be expected, it was surprising to see mature players also suddenly climb almost 100 points – particularly when one could find nowhere near an equivalent number of games in the databases. Discreet inquiries within the Chinese Chess Association led to the quiet admission that 'yes' indeed the results had been fabricated, and that it was official policy. Given that Elo is used as a qualification for the World Championship, not to mention as a passport to other events, it was clear that this was a very serious matter: honest players elsewhere in the world were being silently swindled. Was anyone sanctioned for this scam? Of course not – FIDE didn't have a clue what was happening. What is more galling is the knowledge that, even if they had known, it is highly unlikely that any punitive measures would have been taken.

To understand why this should be so, one only needs to examine the type of officers that preside over our game. Until recently the post of FIDE Vice President was occupied by Zurab Azmaiparashvili, a man who, like the Chinese, had similarly benefited from an Elo fraud in Strumica 1995. His loud protestations of innocence at the time, in the pages of this magazine and elsewhere, were simply false. As a final word on that old saga, I can reveal, for the first time, that Bojan Kurajica – a participant in the tournament – admitted to me over a lunch in Sarajevo a few years back, that al-

though the games were physically played, the results had been procured in advance. The memory of this episode brought Bojan a deep sense of shame, but in mitigation he pleaded that there was a war on in the Balkans; his wife had left him; he was short of money and that he was bringing up his child on his own...

In any other sport, a person of Azmaiparashvili's crooked past would have been automatically barred from high office, as well as incurring a lengthy playing ban. Not so in chess. On the contrary, the more dubious and disreputable one's background, the more warmly one is likely to be welcomed into the bosom of the ever-expanding Presidential Board. Azmaiparashvili has since departed from a position of power, but the ethos of the FIDE administration remains fundamentally unchanged – which is hardly surprising when one considers that many of the key people have been in place for decades. Unfortunately this has a direct negative bearing on FIDE's commercial operations, irrespective of the competence, or lack thereof, of its officers. Vice President Israel Gelfer recently attempted in an open letter to explain why the London bid for the 2012 World Championship failed, attributing it mainly to the withdrawal of Magnus Carlsen. Undoubtedly the absence of the Norwegian poster-boy was a contributory factor in the withdrawal of the British sponsors but, had he honestly desired to pinpoint the fundamental reason for the collapse of the agreement, he need have looked no further than the additional 100,000 euro that was demanded of the organisers for the World Championship Organising Committee – consisting of Makropoulos, Mastrokoukos, Sutovsky and Bareev and himself. This amount was over and above the whopping 400,000 euro cut to which FIDE was legally entitled. Yes, dear greedy gentlemen of FIDE, an extra bale or two of straw does sometimes break the camel's back.

An organisation, like FIDE, that depends partly on the proliferation of titles for its income, cannot be expected to curb their gain by fraudulent means. The prevailing attitude is epitomized by one Presidential Board member whom, when I pointed out that a player from his federation had bought his grandmaster title in Alushta, Ukraine, simply replied 'Oh, you know, do you?' Turning a blind eye is, I am afraid, all too common in the corridors of power. Given the total lack of any political will to grasp the nettle of corruption, the only hope for the future of chess lies in the creation of an independent body to vigorously pursue errancy. It would open more than just a can of worms – probably several large containers full. As I understand, Boris Gelfand was recently offered a bribe by a top-ranked player in an important event. It was an extremely stupid thing to do as I can hardly imagine anyone less likely than Boris to accept. In an ideal world Gelfand would be compelled to report this to the authorities and an investigation would begin. The implicated person would then be kept under close scrutiny. As things currently stand, one can hardly blame Gelfand for staying quiet. Who should he turn to?

The more dubious and disreputable one's background, the more warmly one is likely to be welcomed into the bosom of the ever-expanding Presidential Board.

There are a number of other issues which are tangentially connected with the issue of corruption, for example, the general exceptionally low quality of International Arbiters. If I were to be extremely charitable, I would say that no more than 25% of people with the letters IA before their name are fit to supervise international competition. How can you expect inept officials to police cheating when they can barely distinguish between a bishop and a knight or, as I painfully witnessed at the Asian Indoor Games in Macau 2007 – a very prestigious IOC event – wouldn't recognize a threefold repetition if it slapped them in the face?

As a final comment: can we please put a stop to the disgraceful practice of allowing host nations multiple teams? Permitting Russia five teams (why not seven, or nine?) at the Khanty-Mansiysk Olympiad was the pinnacle of stupidity, which thankfully they didn't take advantage of. I know for a fact other less scrupulous host nations do fix matches, having heard directly from players involved. In effect, by encouraging such overt favouritism the FIDE autocracy is saying 'You are paying for the tournament (and our freebies) so you can do what you like. Just please don't make it too obvious (although even if you do, we won't make a fuss).'

Just possibly, the bold and decisive action of the French Chess Federation will provide a real turning point for chess. However, as one who became a professional chess player in 1982 – the year of Campo's accession – I know full well it probably won't, but one lives in hope... ■

Moscow

The first Aeroflot Open took place in Moscow nine years ago, in 2002. To understand what that tournament meant, we should recall the condition world chess was in. The serious individual events on the annual calendar could be counted on the fingers of one hand: Wijk aan Zee, Linares, Dortmund, Biel. Against that background a tournament with a first prize of $20,000 quickly attracted the attention of the professionals. Starting in 2003 the winner of the tournament received not only money, but also a trip to the super-tournament in Dortmund. So the Aeroflot Open became not just an ordinary festival, but began to fulfill the function of a kind of 'social lift', which made it possible – even if not for long, and only for one person – to overcome the abyss between the 'elite' and the multitude of strong grandmasters for whom there aren't enough invitations or round robin tournaments. This was a chance, and many top players rushed to take advantage of it.

For precisely that reason Grischuk, Svidler, Ivanchuk, Morozevich, Aronian, Radjabov, Mamedyarov and other stars of the first magnitude participated in the Aeroflot Open in its first years. Besides the acknowledged greats, almost all the young talents who are now the pride of world chess passed through the crucible of the Aeroflot Open. It's enough to recall Carlsen and Karjakin – they both achieved grandmaster norms at the Aeroflot Open as children. And three years ago the 17-year-old Ian Nepomniachtchi won a convincing victory – this was his first major claim to a place in the world elite.

> The Aeroflot Open, which was held in Moscow for the 10th time, is still unique among open tournaments. **Mark Glukhovsky**, the editor-in-chief of 64-Chess Review, who was looking for new ways to describe the event, became convinced of this once again.

For many years the foundation of the A-tournament has been formed by grandmasters whose rating is in the range of 2650-2700 – not yet (or already) in the elite, but, as they say, on the brink of it. The future winner usually emerges from these grandmasters too. This group is permanent and includes such powerful players as, for example, Viorel Bologan (the only winner of the Aeroflot Open who also went on to win Dortmund), Emil Sutovsky, Sergey Rublevsky, Alexander Motylev… In recent years success has usually accompanied the younger grandmasters. After Nepomniachtchi (2008) the tournament was won by Baadur Jobava (2009), then the Vietnamese grandmaster Le Quang Liem (2010) – many fans heard his name for the first time then. This year Le Quang Liem set a record by achieving a double.

Now, this is serious. In the whole rich history of the Aeroflot Open not one grandmaster had won it twice. Only a few have even managed to share first place twice. But the difference between sharing first place and first place is very substantial – only one grandmaster gets the trip to the German super-tournament. And a second win in a row is proof, above all, of the seriousness of the intentions of Le Quang Liem, who is trying to take the entrance to the chess elite by storm.

After the Vietnamese grandmaster's sensational win last year I already had the honour of writing about him in the respected publication that you hold in your hands (see New In Chess 2010/2). Back then Le seemed to be a talented natural who had fallen at the right time into the hands of experienced jewellers with the Soviet chess school behind them. After a few training sessions with Bareev and Khalifman his playing style became more universal and shone with new facets. In our conversation then Le particularly emphasized how much those lessons had given him.

Le Quang Liem's second Aeroflot win is proof of the serious intentions of the Vietnamese GM, who is trying to take the entrance to the chess elite by storm.

Le Quang Liem begins to believe in himself

BORIS DOLMATOVSKY

Nikita Vitiugov is a real St.Petersburg man, innate intelligence combines in him with firmness of character and strong principles.

BORIS DOLMATOVSKY

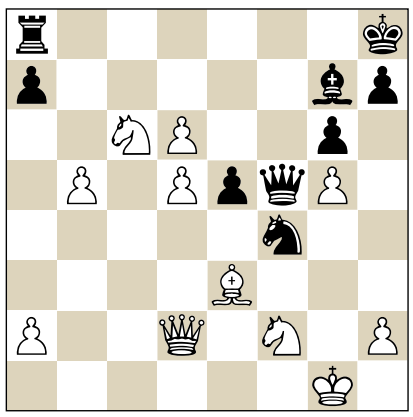
Evgeny Tomashevsky has the nickname 'professor', as despite his chess successes he is continuing his postgraduate studies.

A year passed, and I saw the Vietnamese grandmaster at the Aeroflot Open in Moscow again. And again – on the first line of the tournament table. What had changed in that time, I asked the winner after the end of the last round. 'Firstly, I felt like a professional', Le said. 'Before this I was choosing between studying and chess, and it wasn't an easy choice. In Vietnam chess isn't as popular as it is in Russia. To keep playing I needed successes, after which I began to believe in myself.' Successes indeed came, the main one being second place outright at Dortmund, ahead of Kramnik, Mamedyarov and Leko.

Belief in oneself, in one's rightness, is exceptionally important for any chess player, but particularly for the shy, typically polite Asian Le, who makes a very pleasant impression. I think I already wrote about how his facial expressions, appearance and demeanour contrast sharply with what's happening on the board. He looks ultra-modest, but his tactical arsenal is far from blunt, as many players have discovered, including the ratings favourite for the tournament and candidate Gata Kamsky, who with his loss to the Vietnamese player was kicked out of the battle for first place.

Le Quang Liem looks ultra-modest, but his tactical arsenal is far from blunt.

After a successful run at the start and a win against Mikhail Kobalia it seemed that Le had guaranteed success for himself, but in the eighth round the Vietnamese player lost as White to Cheparinov. This was a very lively and interesting game, in which the Bulgarian grandmaster displayed his best qualities – opening knowledge and depth, and persistence in the hunt for the enemy king. The Vietnamese grandmaster also deserved the praise from his supporters, who were watching the game via the Internet. His fans were impressed that, with a one-point lead over his closest pursuers, Le didn't sit back and defend as White, but went for a big game (confidence in himself!).



Le Quang Liem-Cheparinov
Moscow 2011 (8)
position after 29...♘f4

In this very complicated position Le made the mistake **30.♗xf4?** After the very strong 30.h4 White is no worse. **30...exf4 31.♕d3?** Mistakes often come in pairs. The same would have 31.h4 allowed him to hope for escape, but after **31...♕xg5+** Black took the game to victory.

The Bulgarian grandmaster's win brought some intrigue back to the tournament – in the last round Le had to withstand the pressure from Rauf Mamedov as Black (this task wasn't without problems for him, but he managed it). At the neighbouring board Ivan Cheparinov with white was trying to outplay Nikita Vitiugov, but the St. Petersburg man turned out to be stronger. On the third board the ex-champion of Europe (and bronze prize-winner) Evgeny Tomashevsky with white beat the young Sanan Sjugirov without any problems.

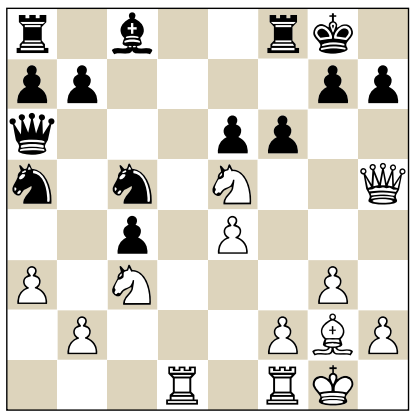
So it was only in the last round that the trio of winners was formed, in which Le turned out to be the best thanks to the additional indicators. It wouldn't be fair not to say a few words about the second- and third-prize winners. Especially as any European federation would be happy to boast such players, while in Russia, against the background of Kramnik, Grischuk, Karjakin, Svidler or Nepomniachtchi, their achievements fade into second place somehow, and these players are hardly known to Western readers.

Nikita Vitiugov, like Le, played five games as Black, and with equal points the number of black games is the first additional indicator at the Aeroflot Open. Nikita only lost out to the winner in the Buchholz system. Sec-

ond place in this tournament was the biggest success the young (23) St. Petersburg grandmaster has had so far. Vitiugov is distinguished by his rare fighting spirit and enviable stability: a combination that guarantees interest from the spectators. Nikita is a real St. Petersburg man: innate intelligence combines in him with firmness of character and strong principles. Some time ago Vitiugov had some sessions with Kortchnoi, and he may have borrowed a few methods of conducting the battle from the great player. He is notable for his devotion to the French Defence, harsh play 'to the bone', total commitment at the board, and high level of play in the endings.

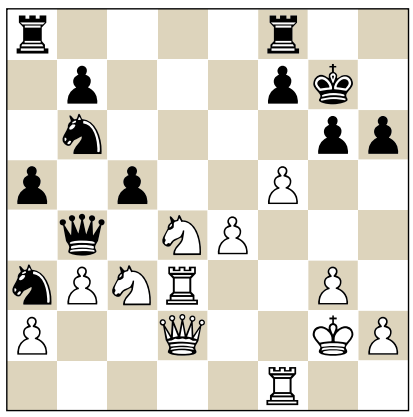
In third place was Vitiugov's friend of the same age, Evgeny Tomashevsky. A native of Saratov (a pleasant city on the Volga in central Russia), Evgeny wears glasses and has the nickname 'professor', which is associated with the fact that despite his chess successes he is continuing his postgraduate studies. This is a subtle positional player who outplays his opponents with his class, and whose best games can confidently be used to teach children. When I look at him I'm automatically reminded of the heroes of the classic plays of Chekhov or even Ostrovsky – provincial Russian intellectuals, people with serious spiritual baggage, lost in the huge and not-all-that-habitable space to which, nevertheless, they are sincerely attached. This is a rare human type in modern Russia, and therefore particularly pleasant. The year 2010 wasn't very successful for Tomashevsky, his chess growth seemed to slow down. The beginning of 2011 allows us to hope that Zhenya will acquire the form that enabled him to win the European Championship the year before last.

Trying to take in the huge palette of impressions that the anniversary Aeroflot Open left me with, I realized that I'd managed to tell you almost nothing about the dozens of extremely interesting games that were played every day at the Hotel Izmailovo. And then I decided to use perhaps a not completely honest method, but, I hope, an effective one. I chose 9 positions, each of which, in my view, deserves attention. Try to solve them on your own before looking at the answer. And then I hope that you'll sense the atmosphere of the playing hall in which dozens of strong grandmasters build their wonderful castles in the air. Because an atmosphere of genuine grandmaster play, when equally interesting events can occur on the first and the 20th boards, is the trademark distinguishing feature of the Aeroflot Open.



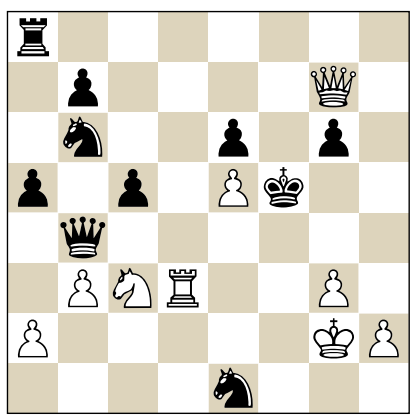
Korobov-Vocaturo (Round 1)
position after 17...f6

After the brilliant **18.♖d8 fxe5 19.♖xf8+ ♔xf8 20.f4!** White developed a very strong attack and won. Unfortunately the talented Ukrainian grandmaster Anton Korobov, who took second place last year, performed poorly this time.



Rodshtein-Zhou Jianchao (Round 8)
position after 26...c5

Boris Gelfand's second, Israeli grandmaster Maxim Rodshtein, is currently serving in the Israeli army. Even Moshe Dayan would have been proud of his final attack, which started with the move **27.♘e6+!** and continued **27...fxe6 28.f6+ ♖xf6 29.♖xf6 ♔xf6 30.♕xh6 ♘c2 31.e5+ ♔f5 32.♕g7 ♘e1+**



33.♔f1 ♘xd3 34.♕f6+ ♔g4 35.♕xg6+ ♔f3 36.♕xd3+ ♔g4 37.♔g2 ♔g5 38.♕h7 1-0

Moscow Aeroflot 2011

					TPR
1	Le Quang Liem	IGM	VIE	2664	6½	2809
2	Nikita Vitiugov	IGM	RUS	2709	6½	2803
3	Evgeny Tomashevsky	IGM	RUS	2695	6½	2797
4	Denis Khismatullin	IGM	RUS	2649	6	2779
5	Yu Yangyi	IGM	CHN	2607	6	2762
6	Gata Kamsky	IGM	USA	2730	6	2756
7	Maxim Rodshtein	IGM	ISR	2625	6	2734
8	Rustam Kasimdzhanov	IGM	UZB	2681	6	2727
9	Rauf Mamedov	IGM	AZE	2660	6	2720
10	Ivan Cheparinov	IGM	BUL	2665	6	2716
11	Sandipan Chanda	IGM	IND	2641	5½	2715
12	Dmitry Bocharov	IGM	RUS	2605	5½	2686
13	Dmitry Andreikin	IGM	RUS	2689	5½	2663
14	Boris Grachev	IGM	RUS	2660	5½	2662
15	Vadim Zviagintsev	IGM	RUS	2660	5½	2669
16	Tigran Petrosian	IGM	ARM	2604	5½	2750
17	Dmitry Yakovenko	IGM	RUS	2718	5½	2718
18	Mikhail Kobalia	IGM	RUS	2666	5½	2715
19	Sanan Sjugirov	IGM	RUS	2626	5½	2700
20	Ding Liren	IGM	CHN	2628	5½	2703
21	Maxime Vachier-Lagrave	IGM	FRA	2715	5½	2698
22	Zhou Jianchao	IGM	CHN	2655	5½	2693
23	Andrey Volokitin	IGM	UKR	2678	5½	2664
24	Emil Sutovsky	IGM	ISR	2695	5½	2669
25	Alexander Khalifman	IGM	RUS	2638	5½	2626
26	Sergei Movsesian	IGM	ARM	2721	5	2668
27	Alexander Motylev	IGM	RUS	2687	5	2603
28	Daniil Dubov	IM	RUS	2459	5	2699

86 players, 9 rounds

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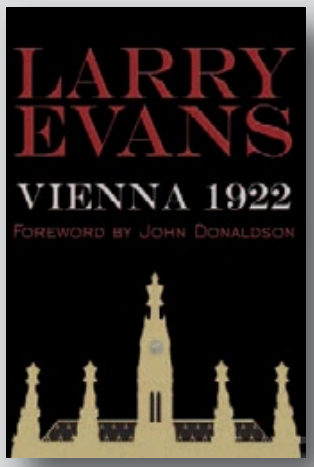
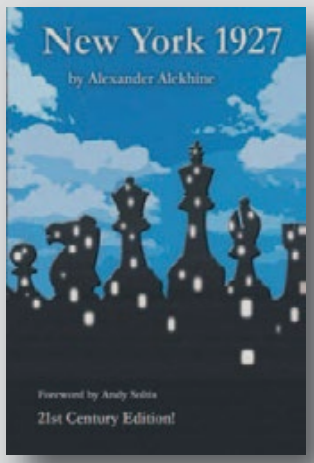


Vienna 1922
by Larry Evans
Russell Enterprises
paperback, 144 pages €17,95

Larry Evans' first book, about one of the great tournaments after World War 1 with Rubinstein, Alekhine, Tartakower and the other great stars. This book has never before been in print. Just when he finished revising and updating this edition, Larry Evans died. A unique document.



New York 1928
by Alexander Alekhine
Russell Enterprises
paperback, 168 pages, € 17.95

With Alekhine's thoughts on his great rival Capablanca, full of insight, humour and brilliance. Finally, 80 years after being published, available in an English editon. The history of one of the great tournaments with the personal history of Alkhine's preparation. A classic.

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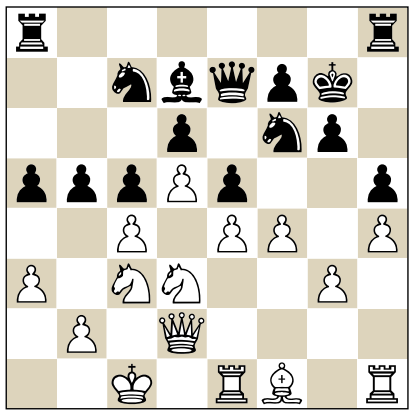
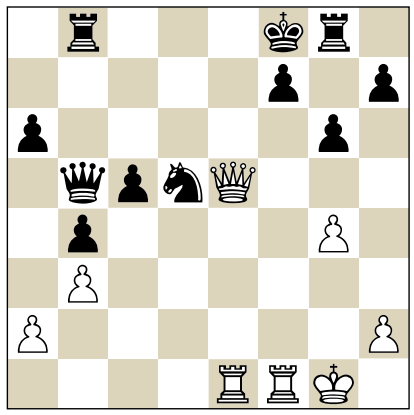


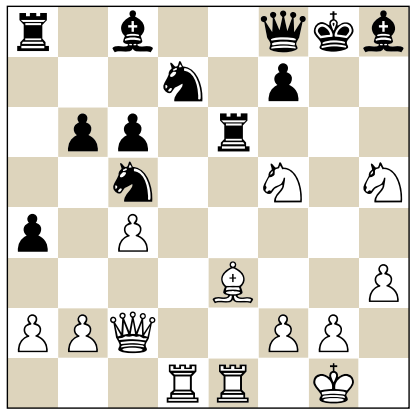
Vitiugov-Novikov (Round 2)
position after 17...b5

A typical example from the work of the silver prize-winner: a tactical skirmish ends with a technically-executed ending. **18.♘xe5! b4 19.♘xd7 bxc3 20.♕xc3 ♕xd7 21.e5 dxe5 22.fxe5 ♘fxd5 23.cxd5 ♕xd5 24.e6+ ♕d4 25.exf7 ♘d5 26.♕xd4+ cxd4 27.♖d1 ♖ac8+ 28.♔b1 ♘e3 29.♖xd4 ♘f5 30.♖d3 ♔xf7 31.♗h3 ♖c5 32.♖c1 ♖hc8 33.♖xc5 ♖xc5 34.♔a2 ♔f6 35.b4 axb4 36.axb4 ♖e5 37.♗xf5 ♔xf5 38.♔a3 ♔e4 39.♖b3 1-0**



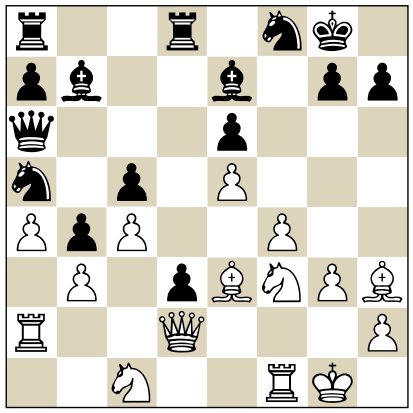
Kovalenko-Savchenko (Round 1)
position after 32...♔f8

33.♖xf7+ ♔xf7 34.♕xd5+ ♔g7 35.♕e5+ ♔h6 36.♖e3 1-0
Simple, but very effective: shoot straight at the king.



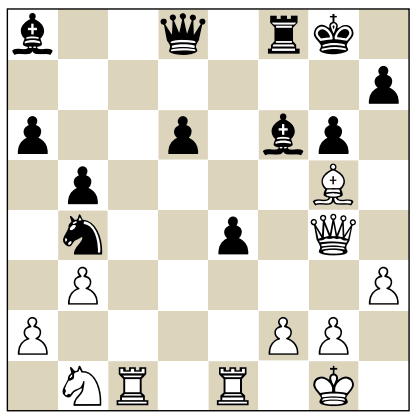
Mareco-A.Zhigalko (Round 4)
position after 24...♗h8

25.♗h6! The computer thinks that White can win more easily. More easily, but not more beautifully! **25...♖xh6 26.♘e7+ ♕xe7 27.♖xe7 ♖xh5 28.♖e8+ ♔g7 29.♕c3+ f6 30.♕g3+ ♖g5 31.♕c7 ♖e5 32.♖xc8 ♖xc8 33.♖xd7+ 1-0**



Kamsky-Ding (Round 6)
position after 21.♗e3

Another defeat for the tournament's ratings favourite: **21...♘xc4! 22.bxc4 ♕xc4 23.f5 exf5 24.♗xf5 ♕d5 25.♗xd3 c4 26.♗b1 ♕c6 27.♕e1 ♘g6 28.♖af2 ♘xe5 29.♘e2 ♖d3 30.♘ed4 ♕d5 31.♗xd3 ♘xd3 32.♕d2 ♘xf2 33.♖xf2 ♖f8 34.h4 c3 35.♕d3 ♗c5 36.♗f4 ♖d8 37.♗e5 ♖e8 38.♗f4 ♖e1+ 39.♖f1 ♕xf3 40.♕xf3 ♗xd4+ 0-1**
Kamsky lost beautifully! On the other hand he won four other games – technically, and as a result took a worthy sixth place.



Sjugirov-Vachier-Lagrave (Round 8)
position after 28...♗f6

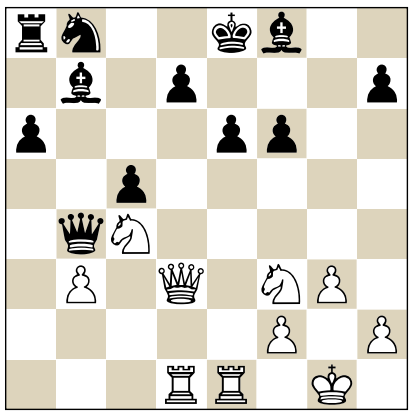
The young Sanan Sjugirov is a threat to the authorities. We recall his wins

BORIS DOLMATOVSKY

An atmosphere of genuine grandmaster play, when equally interesting events can occur on the first and the 20th boards, is the trademark distinguishing feature of the Aeroflot Open.

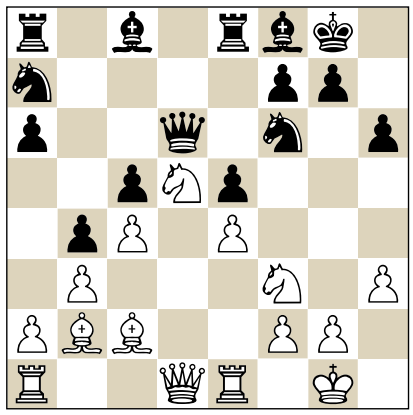
against Svidler and Carlsen. The talented Frenchman was added to the 2700s he'd already beaten.

29.♕e6+ ♔g7 30.♖c8 ♕xc8 31.♗xf6+ ♔h6 32.♕e7 ♖xf6 33.♕xf6 ♘d3 34.♖f1 ♕f5 35.♕h4+ ♔g7 36.♕e7+ ♔h6 37.♕h4+ ♔g7 38.♕d8 ♕f8 39.♕d7+ ♔h6 40.♘c3 ♘f4 41.♕g4 ♗b7 42.♘e2 ♘d3 43.♕d7 ♗d5 44.♘c3 ♘c5 45.♕c7 ♗a8 46.♘d1 1-0



Cheparinov-Salgado Lopez (Round 7)
position after 18...fxe6

Ivan Cheparinov is good in a sharp game. I don't think he had to hesitate for long – all the white pieces are attacking. **19.♖xe6+! dxe6 20.♕d8+ ♔f7 21.♘g5+ ♔g6 22.♘xe6 ♕xb3 23.♘xf8+ ♔h5 24.♘e5 ♗f3 25.♘xf3 ♕xf3 26.♖d5+ ♔h6 27.♕e7 1-0**



Kosteniuk-Vocaturo (Round 5)
position after 23...♗c8

The ex-women's world champion finds an elegant solution. In the attack Alexandra was always particularly dangerous!

24.♘xe5! ♖xe5 25.f4 ♖xd5 26.cxd5 ♕xf4 27.e5 ♘h7 28.♕d3 ♘g5 29.♖f1 ♕h4 30.e6 ♘b5 31.♖xf7 ♘d6 32.♕g6 ♘xh3+ 33.♔f1 ♘f5 34.♖xf8+ 1-0

NOTES BY
Le Quang Liem

SL 6.3 – D43
Le Quang Liem
Gata Kamsky
Moscow Aeroflot 2011 (4)

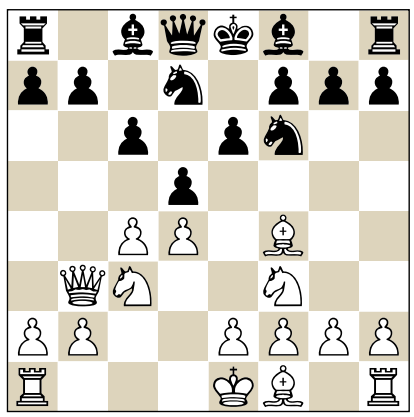
Gata and I met in the fourth round of the Aeroflot Open. I was in the sole lead with 3/3, while my opponent had scored 2½ points.

1.d4 d5 2.c4 c6 3.♘f3 ♘f6 4.♕b3!?

Not a very popular move against the Slav Defence, as I wanted to take Gata out of his game preparation.

4...e6 5.♘c3 ♘bd7 6.♗f4

More common is 6.♗g5, but my move in the game also makes sense.



6...a5!?

This is not a new move, although I can find only one game with this continuation in my database. The idea is quite interesting: Black threatens ...a4, disturbing White's piece harmony, thus forcing White to release the tension in the centre.

7.cxd5

I was out of my book here, and after some thought I decided to exchange these pawns so as not to worry about the advance ...a5-a4 anymore. Of course. Black's light-squared bishop is free now, but White is still ahead in development.

After 7.e3 a4 8.♕c2 a3 9.b3 ♗b4 10.♗d3 ♕a5 11.♖c1 ♘e4 12.♗xe4 dxe4 13.♘d2 f5 Black's position is very comfortable.

I was not sure if White had enough

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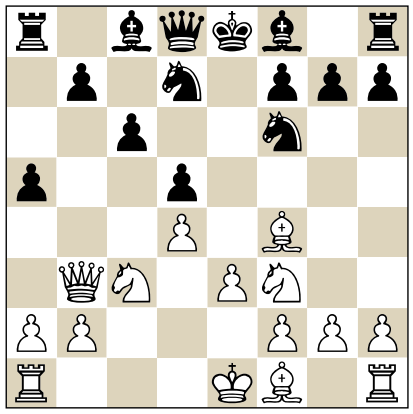
compensation in case of 7.a3 a4 8.♕c2 dxc4 9.e4 b5.
And finally 7.c5 b6 8.cxb6 ♘xb6 should also be OK for Black.

7...exd5 8.e3

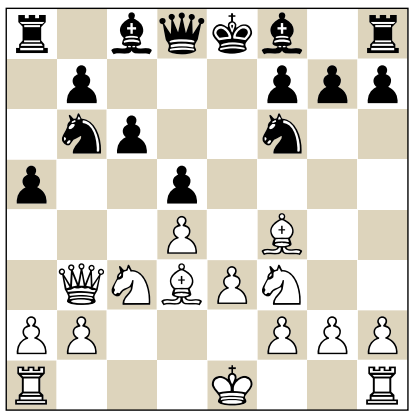


8...♘b6?!

Probably the most accurate move is 8...♘h5!?, with the idea to exchange White's strong bishop after 9.♗g5 ♘df6 10.♗h4 h6.
The only game mentioned above, Sturua-Majorovas, Vilnius 1984, continued with 8...♗e7, when after 9.h3 0-0 10.♗d3 White enjoyed a pleasant position, with all his pieces being very active and well-placed, and he managed to win eventually.

9.♗d3

White has to prevent ...♗f5.

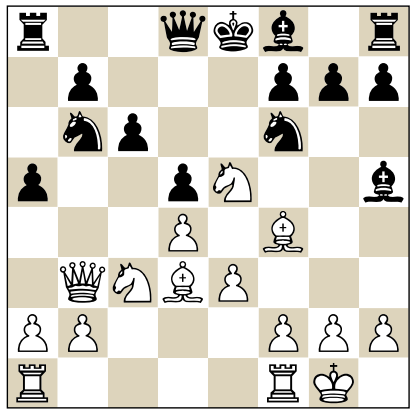


9...♗g4

In this structure, Black usually tries to exchange a couple of minor pieces, because only in this way can he hope for full equality. If Black just develops 'normally' with ...♗e7 and ...♗e6, White simply plays h3, 0-0, and then prepares for an attack on the queenside or in the centre.

I was ready to open the b-file after 9...a4 10.♕c2 a3 11.0-0 axb2 12.♕xb2, when White can press on the queenside (followed by a4, ♘d2, ♖fb1 etc).

10.♘e5 ♗h5 11.0-0



11...a4

White has an edge after 11...♗d6 12.♘xf7 (12.♘xc6?! leads to an approximately equal position after 12...bxc6 13.♗xd6 ♕xd6 14.♕xb6 ♘g4 15.g3 0-0 16.♕c5 ♕h6 17.h4 ♘xe3 18.♖fe1 ♘g4) 12...♗xf7 13.♗xd6 ♕xd6 14.♕xb6 ♘g4 15.g3 0-0 16.♗e2.
11...♗e7 would be a big mistake because of 12.♘a4! ♘xa4 13.♕xb7 ♕c8 14.♕b3.

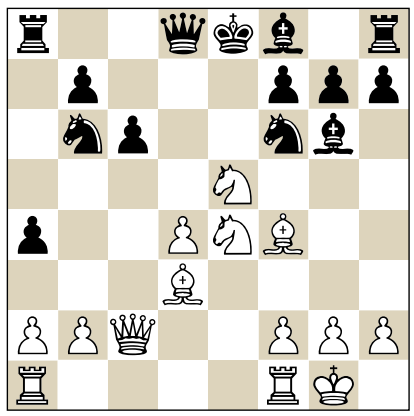
12.♕c2 ♗g6

Also playable is 12...♗d6.

13.e4!?

White has finished his development, while Black spent some tempi moving around with his bishop. Obviously the position is preferable for White. So it is time to open the centre for a fight!
There is no reason to exchange the strong knight for this bishop with 13.♘xg6 hxg6 14.e4 dxe4 15.♘xe4 ♘xe4 16.♖fe1 ♗d6, and Black can be happy about his position.

13...dxe4 14.♘xe4



14...♘xe4

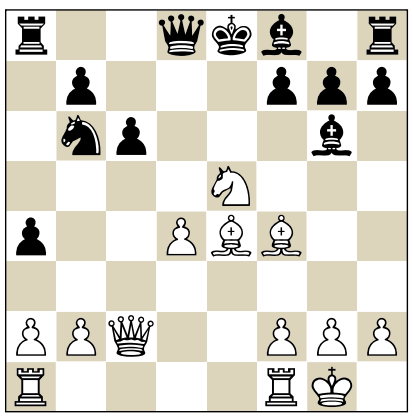
After 14...♗e7:

A) 15.♘c5 ♗xd3 16.♘exd3 0-0 17.♗e5, and White is better thanks to his more active pieces. Black always has to take care of his weaknesses on b7 and a4;

B) Also interesting is 15.♘xf6+, when Black is forced to compromise his pawn structure: 15...gxf6 (15...♗xf6 16.♗xg6 hxg6 17.♘xc6 bxc6 18.♕xc6+ ♔f8 – 18...♘d7 19.♗d6 – 19.♗c7 ♕d5 20.♕xb6 ♗xd4 21.♕d6+ ♕xd6 22.♗xd6+ ♔g8 23.♗a3 gives White an extra pawn. This endgame may not be easily winning, but as they say, a pawn is still a pawn!) 16.♘f3 ♘d5 17.♗d2, and White has a slight advantage;

B) Wrong is 15.♘xc6?! bxc6 16.♘xf6+ gxf6! 17.♗xg6 hxg6 18.♕xc6+ ♔f8 19.♗c7 ♖c8 20.♖ac1 ♖xc7 21.♕xc7 ♕xc7 22.♖xc7 ♗d6, when Black is at least not worse. In this kind of position there are many possible sacrifices on c6, some are just brilliant, but in this case it simply won't work.

15.♗xe4



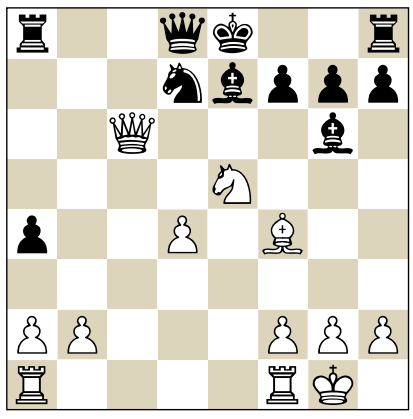
15...♗e7?

Careless! This is possibly the decisive mistake. I suppose that my opponent had missed something in his calculations.

The only defence is 15...♗xe4 16.♕xe4 ♕d5 17.♕e2 ♗e7 18.♖fe1 0-0 19.♘xc6 ♕xc6 20.♕xe7 ♘d5, when Black is a pawn down, but keeps good drawing chances. His strong knight on d5 is a very important factor.

16.♗xc6+ bxc6 17.♕xc6+ ♘d7

Black is lost after 17...♔f8 18.♕xb6 ♕xb6 19.♘d7+ ♔e8 20.♘xb6 ♖a6 21.♗c7.



18.♘xg6

Not, of course, 18.♘xd7, which only leads to move repetition: 18...♖c8 19.♘f6+ ♔f8 20.♘d7+ ♔e8.

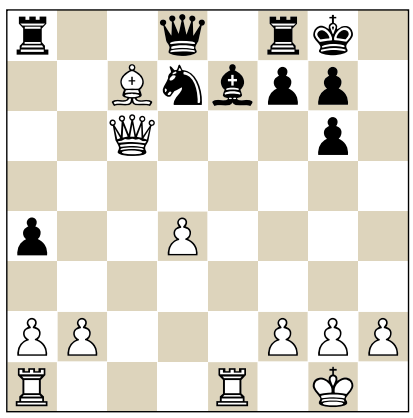
18...hxg6

After 18...♖c8 19.♘xe7! ♖xc6 20.♘xc6 ♕f6 (the only move) 21.♖fe1+ ♔f8 22.♗d2 h5 23.♘e7! is not easy to see in advance when you are calculating 16.♗xc6. Black's king is stuck, his rook cannot get out of the corner, while White's threat of ♗b4 or ♖ac1 cannot be parried, so White is winning.

19.♖fe1 0-0

Or 19...♖c8 20.♖xe7+, and wins.

20.♗c7



Black can no longer hang on to his extra piece.

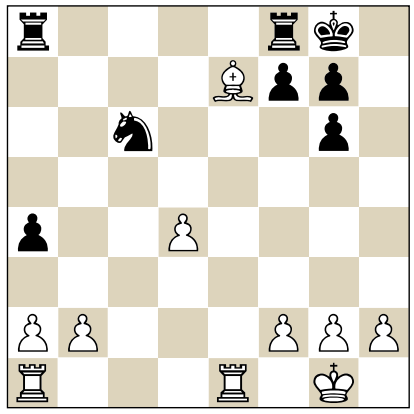
20...♘b8

White also regains the piece after 20...♕e8 21.♗d6 ♖c8 22.♕xa4 ♖a8 23.♕b5, and Black is lost.

21.♗xd8

Equally good is 21.♕xa8 ♕xc7 22.♕xa4, but I thought this option might complicate things.

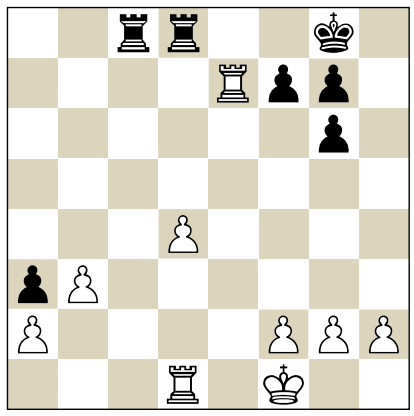
21...♘xc6 22.♗xe7



22...♘xe7

22...♖fb8 is more stubborn. Still, after 23.♗a3 (I do not trust the engine's suggestion 23.d5 ♘xe7 24.♖xe7 ♖xb2 25.d6 ♖ab8 26.♔f1, when the computer likes White very much, but as we all know, 'Rook endings are never won!') 23...♘xd4 24.♖ac1 ♖c8 25.♗c5 ♘e6 26.♗e3 it should be technically winning. White is a healthy pawn up, and in this endgame the bishop is superior to the knight.

23.♖xe7 ♖fd8 24.♖d1 a3 25.b3 ♖ac8 26.♔f1



Parrying both the threat of ...♖c2 and that of ...♖xd4 at the same time.

26...♖d5 27.♖d2

Well, this rook ending with two pawns up is really winning. White will soon collect Black's a-pawn by playing ♖a7. If Black insists on keeping this pawn he must leave one of his rooks on the a-file. Then White just activates his king to support the passed pawn and try to exchange a couple of rooks.

With no chances left, Black resigned. ■

Hans Ree

Still Making Ripples

No chess player but Bobby Fischer could do it. His new biography by Frank Brady entered the New York Times bestseller list almost immediately after it was released.

It is certainly not easy to tell the glorious tale of Bobby Fischer's ascent to the throne without grieving for his later descent into hatefulness and seeing every incident of his career as a presage of the dissolution of his later years. But a glorious tale it was.

Will it ever end? Recently we got a book consisting of Fischer documents, a new documentary film about his life and a new biography, spawning a new stream of reviews in newspapers and magazines. The Fischer industry never sleeps.

I think that since 1992 I have already written six articles on Bobby Fischer for New In Chess, only one of which was about a chess event. So, onward ho for number seven.

The Fischer documents were published last year by chess collector David DeLucia in a big, handsome volume entitled *Bobby Fischer Uncensored*. At the Tata tournament in Wijk aan Zee it was offered by one of the booksellers. Browsing through the pages I was strongly tempted to buy, but deterred by the stiff price of 400 euros.

'Yes, it's expensive', admitted the bookseller, adding that on a website the book had already been offered at more than three times the original price. 'Offered' he said, not 'sold', but still he managed to set off a train of thought. I might buy the book, have it copied and then make a nice profit selling the original. Why wouldn't I? Well, honestly speaking – to borrow a favourite phrase of modern players – because I was cowardly enough to fear the disapproval of the seller if I would cynically say, 'Well, in that case I'll take it.' Instead I said hypocritically, 'Thanks for telling me, but I'm not a businessman.'

In the meantime I have found that the New In Chess shop offers DeLucia's book for a substantially lower price than the bookseller at Tata. I've still not bought it, though I do think that given the limited edition, resellers will be able to make a nice profit indeed. But enough sales talk; investment advice is not my forte.

In January the documentary film *Bobby Fischer Against the World*, directed by Liz Garbus, had its premiere at the Sundance film festival in Utah. Maybe Garbus had been inspired by Brad Darrach's amusing and slightly malicious book of 1974, which had almost the same title, *Bobby Fischer vs the Rest of World*. This may not be the best book on Fischer, but I think it is the best written one and the most enjoyable for the general reader.

My impression is that the film was generally well received, though some critics remarked that it sagged a bit after Fischer's match against Spassky in 1972. Like his life, you might say.

And then there is the real subject of this article, Frank Brady's new biography *Endgame*, which appeared in February. It has the grim subtitle *Bobby Fischer's Remarkable Rise and Fall – from America's Brightest Prodigy to the Edge of Madness*.

Gloom of Hindsight

'The Princess moved a little closer and went on, in a clear slightly lilting voice, without sadness, for she knew that happy things can only be spoken of in a happy way, without grieving because they have vanished...'

This is from one of Vladimir Nabokov's earliest stories, *A Matter of Chance*, written in Russian in 1924. The main character's name is Luzhin, like in the novel *The Defense*. Aleksey Lvovich Luzhin, the principal of the story, is not a chess player, but his fate is as sad as that of the more famous Luzhin.

It is not one of Nabokov's greatest stories, as it leans too much on a simple trick; a chance incident, insignificant in itself, that destroys a life. But it has these fine lines about happy things that should be remembered and spoken of in a happy way, not contaminated by the gloom of hindsight. The lines should be engraved upon the farewell presents that former lovers, now going through a painful divorce, might give to each other. Strong mental discipline is needed to see the past as it was, and not as a prelude to the present.

It is certainly not easy to tell the glorious tale of Bobby Fischer's ascent to the throne without grieving for his later descent into hatefulness and seeing every incident of his career as a presage of the dissolution of his later years. But a glorious tale it was.

We still have his games, say pious chess lovers. Of course we do, but we have much more.

Different Timelines

In 2004 Tim Harding wrote an article for the *ChessCafe* website titled 'Playing the What if...? Game.' It was an exercise in counterfactual chess history.

What if Mikhail Chigorin had won the 23rd game of his second match for the World Championship against Wilhelm Steinitz in Havana in 1892, instead of committing a horrible blunder? What if Paul Keres, at the end of World War II, had escaped with his family to Sweden, while the Soviet army was occupying Estonia? And finally, what if Bobby Fischer had not turned up for the third game of his match against Boris Spassky in 1972?

Fischer had lost the first game as a consequence of daredevilry in a drawn position. The second game he lost by default because of a conflict about the cameras on stage. Because of these cameras Fischer demanded that the third game not be played in the big theatre hall, but in a backroom. Spassky gave in and lost that game and later the match.

In his book *Chess Duels* Yasser Seirawan holds the view that Spassky shouldn't have given in, not only for his own sake, but also because as the World Champion he had the duty to uphold the dignity of the championship match. This is a reasonable point of view, but what would have happened if Spassky had stood firm? Theoretically, arbiter Lothar Schmid could have forfeited Spassky, but that is extremely unlikely. Spassky had given in several times already and almost the entire chess world would have taken his side if he had said 'enough is enough'.

Fischer would most likely not have turned up for the third game and lost it by default. Then the same would have happened with the fourth game and after that he would be disqualified. The title would have been safe in Soviet hands for a long time to come.

According to Harding's scenario, the Western chess boom of the early 1970s would not have happened in that case, nor would there be the 'English Chess Explosion' of the 1970s-1980s. Western players who were in their twenties in 1972 would be disillusioned with chess and would abandon it for the Japanese game Go. Ulf Andersson and Jan Timman would struggle on, but not qualify for a title match. In the West there would be little money for chess.

Later there would be championship matches between Karpov and Kasparov, just as in our timeline, but Nigel Short would never play chess and become the leader of a rock band instead. New in Chess magazine was founded in 1984 and flopped.

New In Chess flopping may be stretching counterfactual history a bit too far, but the rest of Harding's bleak scenario seems quite plausible. But Spassky gave in, Fischer won the match, chess boomed for quite some time and though we have our complaints, all in all we are not doing badly.

Dark Clouds of 1972

For the task of speaking of happy things in a happy way, Fischer's biographer Frank Brady had the advantage that he had done it already in the past. In 1965 he authored *Profile of a Prodigy*, which had a revised edition in 1973. There the tale ends when Fischer signs the score sheet of the last game of the 1972 match, disappears through the backdoor of the building and jumps into a car to escape from the mob of reporters.

After that there was a chapter in which Brady, in 1973, summed up Fischer's performances and speculated a bit about the future. He wrote that 'undoubtedly' Fischer would enjoy a reign of decades as World Champion, like Lasker and Steinitz. Also there was no doubt in Brady's mind that Fischer would soften his nationalistic prejudice toward the Soviet Union, and he even indulged in a fantasy of cooperation for the greater good of chess: 'Should Fischer, in a noble gesture, visit the Soviet Union and, like Lasker, remain for a few years, imparting his theoretical knowledge and practical advice, he might also gain some valuable insights of his own. More importantly, he would simultaneously elevate the art while helping to demolish the cold war politics of chess, all at once.'

It was not to be, and I think that it doesn't take the blessing of hindsight to find the idea of Fischer moving to the Soviet Union to share his knowledge pretty far out of character. But it shows the high spirits of the time.

Hans Ree

However, Spassky saw dark clouds coming for Fischer. Already protective towards the man he would later call 'my brother', Spassky said at the time that Fischer might have some moments of great happiness after his victory, but that he would soon find that the region where he had arrived was cold and lonely.

Though the title of Brady's new book is *Endgame*, it is not a sequel that starts where his previous book on Fischer left off. It describes the whole of Fischer's life and ends after his death with the legal fights for his estate.

The part up to 1972 is newly written, though of course some overlaps could not be avoided.

More than its predecessor, *Endgame* is aimed at the general reader. While *Profile of a Prodigy* had tournament tables and a section of 90 games with notes, in the new book even basic chess terms like 'opening' are explained to the lay public.

Fighting a Phantom

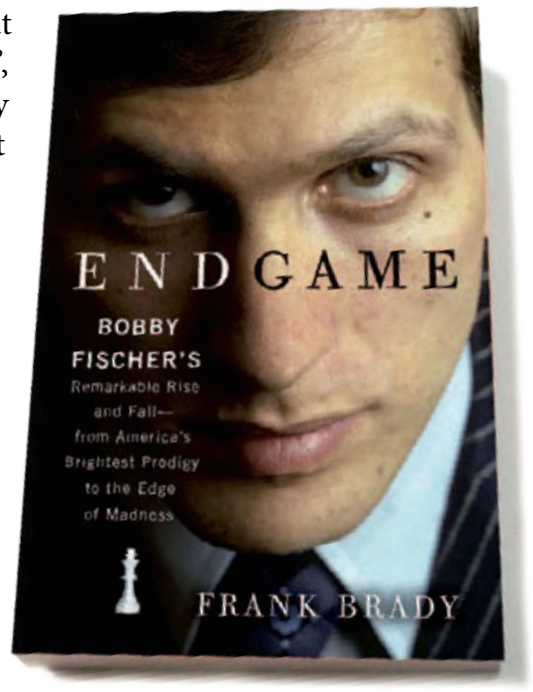
Among seasoned chess watchers a certain Fischer fatigue can be noticed. Is it really possible, then, that a book about the life of Bobby Fischer is still attractive to non-chess players, almost 40 years after he became World Champion? It sure is. Apparently, immediately after its release *Endgame* came in on the New York Times best-seller list at #31.

The New York Review of Books, maybe the world's most prestigious magazine on culture and politics, invited Garry Kasparov to write a review. Though both in this review and in his *Predecessor* book, Kasparov gives Fischer his due as a chess giant, Fischer weariness must have set in long ago for him. He notes that after he had become World Champion, interviewers rarely missed a chance to bring up Fischer's name. Would Kasparov beat Bobby Fischer? Would he play him if he came back? Did he know where Fischer lived? Kasparov felt as if he was playing a one-sided match against a phantom.

And then, in 1992, Fischer did come back, sort of. Kasparov, not much impressed with Fischer's play against Spassky in 1992, writes: 'But the ghost had renewed his license to haunt us all for a while longer.'

Kasparov's last sentence goes 'Bobby Fischer was one of a kind, his failings as banal as his chess was brilliant' and it would be only human if perhaps while penning or dictating that line he had the feeling that at last he was able to hammer the stake through the phantom's heart.

I wondered about the word 'banal', though. Like many others I think that Fischer was mentally disturbed during his last decade and maybe long before that. But was his mind banal? In an earlier article for New In Chess I mentioned Fischer's remark on radio that the Jews wanted to exterminate the elephants because their trunks reminded them of uncircumcised goyim. Far be it from me to endorse that opinion, but I would call it weirdly imaginative rather than banal.



Frank Brady: Endgame (Crown Publishers 2011)

Zen Master

Frank Brady is well qualified to write on Fischer's life. He has been an editor of chess magazines and Secretary of the U.S. Chess Federation, he is an international arbiter and during Fischer's younger years he met him often and played hundreds of games against him. He is an experienced writer who has done biographies of Aristoteles Onassis, *Playboy*'s Hugh Hefner, Barbra Streisand and Orson Welles. Not a man who takes assignments on midgets, one might say.

Diligent in checking sources and interviewing hundreds of people, Brady also had access to unpublished material such as portions of KGB and FBI files on Bobby and his mother Regina, an autobiographical essay by Bobby written in his teens and the personal archives of Regina and Jack Collins, Bobby's chess mentor when he was a kid. Nobody knows more about Fischer than Brady.

With all this knowledge it seems unnecessary to resort to what Brady calls 'the techniques of the novelist: elaboration of setting, magnification of detail, fragments of dialogue, and revelation of interior states.'

I think that without a small dose of these techniques no biographer can get by, but I still feel uncomfortable with them. A possibly all too audacious instance of the technique comes already in the opening scene of *Endgame*, when Bobby is fighting with guards at Tokyo's Narita Airport on July, 13, 2004.

'Several of the guards began hitting him with batons and pummeling him with their fists. He fought back, kicking and screaming, and he managed to bite one of the guards on the arm. Eventually he went down. A half dozen guards hoisted him in the air and began carrying him by his arms and legs. Bobby continued squirming to get loose as the guards struggled to take him to an unknown destination. He kicked frantically, almost yanking, his hands free. It was then that they put the black hood over him.'

So far so good, up to here I can accept the novelist's technique. But then Brady writes: 'Gasping for air, Bobby tried to enter a Zen state to clear his mind.' Really? A Zen state? Bobby? Even if Brady showed me a certified declaration of a Japanese Zen master as a source, I wouldn't believe this,

so certainly not as an instance of the technique of the novelist.

Heavyweight Champion?

Some chess writers have noticed inaccuracies in this book. Edward Winter even wrote on his website that after receiving an uncorrected proof on December 1, he sent, after a quick skim, a list of errors several pages long, which was promptly forwarded by Brady to the publisher. Regrettably, it came too late to be incorporated into the book. Why such hurry by the publisher?

Though I don't have Winter's eagle eyes for such matters, I found a few errors too. A cluster of a few small errors and one big one can be found when Brady describes the mini-match of two games between Fischer and Max Euwe in New York in 1957.

Euwe is described as a doctor of philosophy, when he was a doctor of mathematics, and as a professor of mathematics at the Amsterdam Lyceum, while in fact he had been a mathematics teacher – though not at the Amsterdam Lyceum – but at the time of his games against young Bobby Fischer he worked for the Remington Rand company. These are trifles.

But then Brady writes: '...improbably, given his academic and chess prowess, he'd once been the European heavyweight amateur boxing champion.'

Improbably indeed. Where did Brady get this from? He has an extensive apparatus of notes, but no source is given for this extraordinary claim. It must have been a private communication, but from whom? I think that Euwe wasn't the man to play such boastful pranks, but I may be wrong, for I have sometimes found unexpected frivolous streaks in the great doctor.

Euwe took some boxing lessons in the 1930s and a photo exists of him in a boxing suit and gloves, but this doesn't make him a European heavyweight champion.

Nobody is perfect, as Osgood Fielding III memorably said, and it wouldn't become me to throw stones, because I have been among the many journalists that have propagated some myths that Brady dismantles in his book.

The fillings that Bobby had removed from his teeth. Like many others I had bought the story that this was done because he feared radio signals transmitted by the Soviets, but Brady convincingly explains that this often repeated story is bogus and that Bobby had done it for health reasons, to protect his teeth gums and his body against the effects of metal fillings.

Brady has done a great deal to improve the reputation of Regina Fischer.

He wasn't completely wrong, as the effects of mercury in particular are still hotly debated, but the typically radical solution he chose is certainly not the right way. It was a misguided action, but far less foolish than doing it out of fear of radio signals, and I am sorry that I believed and repeated that story.

I have also been wrong about the method by which a DNA sample was taken from Fischer's body at the graveyard in Laugardaelir, a year and a half after his death, but I consider that a smaller sin.

Religious Overtones

As readers of New In Chess may remember, the DNA exhumation was done to put light on the question of whether Fischer was the biological father of the Philippine girl Jinky Young, and the eventual verdict was that her and Bobby's DNA samples did not match.

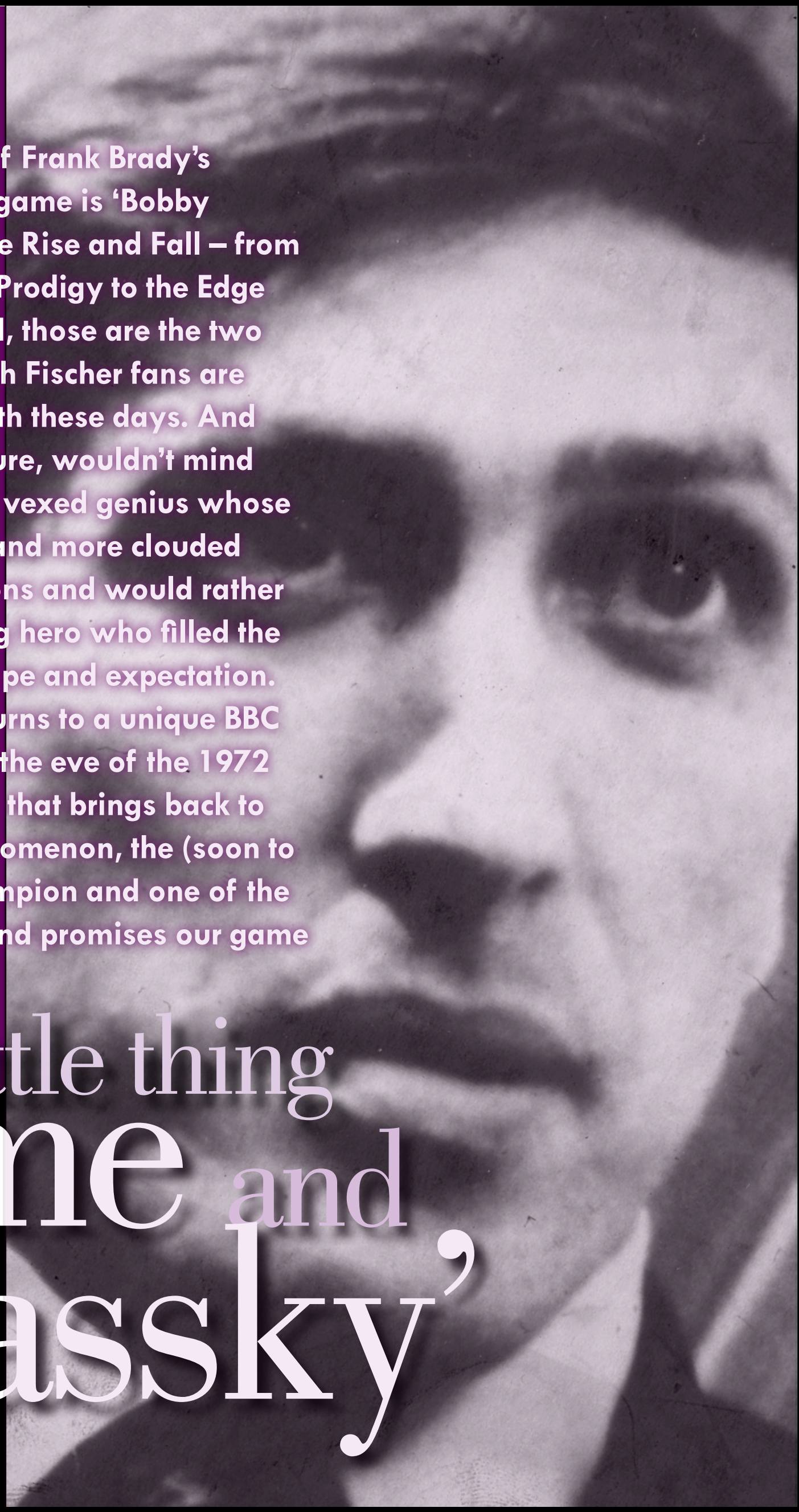
However, Jinky's Philippine attorney Samuel Estimo, a chess player with a FIDE rating of 2264, did not give up. Brady quotes an amazing letter in which Estimo suggests that between the burial and the DNA exhumation Fischer's body may have been removed and replaced by that of somebody else.

Are we entering the realm of religion here? I was reminded of the scene in the New Testament when people are entering the cave where the dead body of Jesus had been placed, and found that it had disappeared.

Doubters have, of course, suggested that the disappearance of the body had no supernatural causes, but that it must have been taken away by Jesus' followers. The late Hein Donner even held the theory that the followers had eaten the body of Christ to be one with Him, and that their meal must be the historical origin of the Roman Catholic sacrament of the Eucharist. Who knows what Fischer's followers have done, Estimo may have thought, but understandably Brady doesn't follow his fancy.

Brady's well-balanced account does not throw a fundamentally different light on Fischer's life and character, but by supplying many details that were previously unknown, to me anyway, he is able to make him appear more human, even in his later years, than in the familiar stories that have concentrated on his crazy excesses.

And Brady has done a great deal to improve the reputation of Regina Fischer, who has often been portrayed as the absent mother, always running after left-wing causes at the cost of her children. Here she is shown as a sensible, hard-working and loving mother who kept close relations with Bobby till the end of her life. ■



The telling subtitle of Frank Brady's new biography Endgame is 'Bobby Fischer's Remarkable Rise and Fall – from America's Brightest Prodigy to the Edge of Madness'. Indeed, those are the two poles between which Fischer fans are rocked back and forth these days. And all of them, we're sure, wouldn't mind forgetting about the vexed genius whose persona was more and more clouded by his darkest demons and would rather remember the young hero who filled the chess world with hope and expectation. Jimmy Adams returns to a unique BBC interview filmed on the eve of the 1972 match with Spassky that brings back to life Fischer the phenomenon, the (soon to be) 11th World Champion and one of the greatest prodigies and promises our game has ever seen.

'This little thing with me and Spassky'

In their definitive work on the 1972 Fischer-Spassky match, *Bobby Fischer Goes To War*, authors David Edmonds and John Eidinow write on page 135: 'Fischer granted the BBC an interview, conducted by a well-known science correspondent, James Burke, and produced by Bob Toner, who has good reason to remember the occasion. 'We started recording and Fischer looked very bored and for two reels we got nothing: twenty minutes of nothing, just one-line answers. I thought my career was disappearing down the tubes. But then, in between reels, he asked Burke what kind of events he normally covered. Burke said he had reported on the Apollo launches, and you could see Fischer's interest light up. And he said. 'You mean you go to Houston, you go to launch pads?' 'Yes,' said Burke, 'I know Neil Armstrong very well.' After that Fischer couldn't stop talking...'

Although tiny snippets from this interview appear here and there on the Internet, it is for the most part unknown to today's chess public. Moreover there is the danger, even if the original tapes do still exist, that they might suffer the same fate as those of an earlier weekly chess programme on BBC radio, which had been wiped clean for reuse! Here, tragically, many wonderful chess talks, reports, interviews, and commentaries, including a complete recording of a consultation game between Bobby Fischer/Leonard Barden and Jonathan Penrose/Peter Clarke were destroyed.

It is with this in mind that we would like to offer readers a transcript of the Fischer interview as it appeared in the documentary *This little thing with me and Spassky*. Though, of course, it can never come close to taking the place of the superb televised version, readers will at least be able to enjoy some interesting Fischer dialogue which, to our knowledge, has not been published elsewhere.

Incidentally, presenter James Burke's speed of thought might be compared to that of Fischer himself when analysing or playing blitz, while his striking command of the English language always added a distinct trademark to the many popular science programmes he hosted on British television, starting in the sixties. His dynamic delivery could not fail to inspire – and sometimes bewilder! – his prime time viewers and even today, now in his seventies, he continues to promote his lively brand of education over the Internet.

This little thing with me and Spassky was broadcast on BBC television in July 1972, on the eve of the world title match. The documentary starts with footage from Buenos Aires 1971, where Fischer has just clinched the Candidates final match against former Soviet world champion Tigran Petrosian, and the crowd has gone wild, applauding loudly and continually chanting B-o-b-b-y, B-o-b-b-y, B-o-b-b-y, whilst the new title challenger is on stage for the closing ceremony. Throughout the documentary, in addition to an array of historical photographs, press clippings, illustrations, etc., we are treated to a wonderful selection of moving pictures, depicting, for example, Lenin, Stalin, Capablanca, Alekhine, Euwe, Botvinnik, Tal, Petrosian, Spassky (high jumping!), Fidel Castro, Larsen and Gligoric. Then there is Fischer, giving a simultaneous display in New York, competing in Candidates tournaments and Olympiads against Spassky, Tal, and Petrosian, analysing alone on his favourite Yugoslav chess set, playing blitz, celebrating his birthday, ten pin bowling and even doing physical exercises, following the directions of an instructor on a 'keep fit' television programme.

'This will be the apex of my whole life - taking on Spassky.'

However, we will concentrate on the actual interview, occasionally interrupted by a few explanatory lines to depict the context. We join the documentary at the point where the two world championship contestants are introduced and Fischer appears on the screen talking to James Burke.

'I think I've been the best since I was

18 or 19, back in 1962. Well, I thought I had the talent even before I played the game, as I was just always winning games... I like to keep playing all the top players to really prove that I am the best player in the world today so when they go home that night they can't kid themselves that they're so hot... This will be the apex of my whole life – taking on Spassky.

'It has really been my whole career building up to this one point, this is the big match. It's for everything. It's for the title. If I don't win it's not going to be easy to get up there again. Even this little thing with me and Spassky is a sort of a microcosm of the whole world political situation. You always hear about the world leadership sort of fighting it out hand to hand, it's that kind of thing now, they're doing it with bombs but we're handing it out over the board.'

You obviously consider yourself the best chess player in the world. Does that ever strike you as being arrogant?
'No, I mean if it's true, it's not arrogant.'

Who do you think is going to win between you and Spassky?
'Well, it's not 100% but then it wasn't 100% that I was going to beat Taimanov, or Larsen or Petrosian, but I'm definitely the heavy favourite according to all of the past results. I'm not going to stay up nights worrying. I'm just going to go in there. It's going to be over pretty soon.'

What means most to you about the title? Is it for yourself or is it how other people regard you as world champion?
'I guess it's how other people regard me as champion, because I've felt all along I'm the best and so I'm not proving that much to myself any more. But, even then, I'd like to prove it to myself too, and especially the general public – and I'd like to show the Russians too. That's what I'm going to enjoy about getting the title, reading the Russian magazines, what they say about it. Either they are going to say nothing or they are going to have some involved, nonsensical explanation.' (laughs)

About why Spassky lost?
'Yeah.'

One gets the impression that you to some extent resent the Russian domination over the last decades of chess.
'Well the thing I resent is that when I first started playing chess, the Russians were my heroes, and they still are as chess players, and I used to study all their literature, and most of the first books I read were Russian chess books. But the first time the Russians ever mentioned me, I remember when I was thirteen, they wrote that there's this talented American player and showed this famous game I'd won against Donald Byrne, which they called the 'Game of the Century' – not the Russians but the rest of the world. On top of the game they said, well, he's a very fine, talented young player but all this publicity he's getting is sure to do damage to his character. And then sure enough, from then on, they started attacking my character, they'd prepared it and then they started attacking my character. You know, they'd never even met me or knew anything about me so this kind of attitude really turned me off.'

> 'They don't believe in giving foreigners a chance to play for the title.'

But what did they say about... What could they know about your character?
'Well nothing, it's just pure propaganda. And they don't believe...they just believe they have the title and the title belongs to them in perpetuity because it's theirs and, you know, that's their attitude. They don't have a kind of a sporting attitude. Their attitude should be the best should have the title but that's not their attitude. They don't believe in giving foreigners a chance to play for the title.'

They don't believe you're the best?
'Well, I don't know about that...' *(said with a quizzical frown followed by a faint smile)*

The first time that Fischer tried to qualify for the world championship match was when he was 16, and it was then that his almost fanatical anti-Russian attitude became known to the public. The tournament in question was held in Yugoslavia in 1959, and Bobby Fischer was one of eight Candidates. There were also four Russians taking part, including Mikhail Tal.

One of the other Candidates, Yugoslav grandmaster Svetozar Gligoric, describes what happened. 'Tal made a public statement to the press that he would beat Fischer in all four games and Fischer was angry about that, I remember.'

Tal was one of Russia's great chess discoveries. At the time his dashing style of play had caught the imagination of the chess public and as the tournament progressed from city to city, hundreds of fans, who couldn't get in, followed the games on demonstration boards outside the hall. Tal, who later went on to become world champion the following year, defeating Botvinnik for the title, was three up on Fischer when the final game approached.

Feelings were running unusually high. The story is taken up by Gligoric: 'Fischer made a statement before the final quarter of the tourna-

ment in Belgrade, that he was going to stop the Russians. He was angry about the whole catastrophe which he had suffered against Tal.'

Fischer's second for the tournament was grandmaster Larsen of Denmark, who recalls: 'He couldn't win the tournament but he wanted desperately to win this game and, very early, Fischer got a tremendous attack. You know, Tal has this very strong look, this gaze, and there were people who said he could hypnotise them, even wanting to put on sun glasses because of Tal's eyes... Anyway there is a critical position where Tal has a very difficult game and Fischer is thinking and he has a choice between two moves. It is really so complicated and he is so nervous that he writes down one of these moves on his score sheet and then looks at Tal. However Tal is looking at Fischer's score sheet and reading the move, but he does not turn red! So Fischer thought that as that move did not make Tal nervous he would then make the other one – and that lost. Now Fischer says that it's against the rules if you write down your move before you make it, but at that time he did that himself.'

Gligoric: 'I remember that Fischer complained about having lost all four games to Tal, thinking that he should have won them because he had good positions. After that his bitter feelings against Soviet grandmasters began to grow.'

The next time Fischer was a Candidate was in Curaçao in 1962. He didn't do very well, he blamed the Russians for cheating by playing easy games against each other so they would be fresh when they got to him. He threatened that he would not play again unless the rules were changed to match play. They were.

'I just feel that they were not going to let anyone have the title, they were just attacking me and using their players to write nasty articles about me and rig games amongst themselves and this kind of thing. For example, in Curaçao 1962, that was the one specific charge that I made against them that they cheated at chess. I wrote an article 'The Russians cheat at chess' and basically what they were doing was playing me after one or two days of rest, because they were making draws with each other. When they were playing me, they were fresh, whereas I was playing hard games every day and getting run down. It was hard to know exactly what they were doing but I also think they were throwing games. When you look at the score, you see the player who won beat the two lower down Russians very badly – way out of proportion there, very strange.' *(Whenever Fischer wished to drive home a point, he had a habit of using his hands for emphasis, as here for example).*

Bobby Fischer gets into a car during the 1972 World Championship match in Reykjavik. 'This is the big match. It's for everything. It's for the title.'

Following a detour that concentrates on an attempt to sketch Fischer's personality and his enormous drive, the interview continues with questions about his early youth, when he learned to play chess.

'I found that I just had more of a feel for the game. I just had more of a knack for winning than others. I was very young, yeah.'

How did it first happen?
'Well, I liked games, I liked playing a lot of board games at home, we had parcheesi, monopoly, all of these board games, Chinese checkers and whatnot, but I kept hearing that the hardest thing was chess so I persuaded my mother to give me that. The game was too advanced for me, that's what they said, but that's the game I concentrated on from then on. Because even when I was playing other games I thought they were too simple. There was just something that didn't turn me on about other games like Chinese chess, where they play with marbles and things.'

And then you got a chess game in front of you and said: this is it.
'Yeah, as far as I knew, this was the hardest game.'

Even before you knew the rules?
'That's right.'

Who did you play your first games with?
'I played with my sister, but she wasn't too interested, then I started playing games with myself. I would make the white moves, then the black moves, then we *(laughs)*... we'd play through a whole game, then eventually I would checkmate the other guy. I was the one who won *(laughs again)*. I did that for a while and then my mother started to get worried whether it's healthy playing chess by myself all the time so she got me some opponents, local kids, then she'd start taking me around to chess clubs, like that.

'Then I started getting lessons from a local player at the Brooklyn chess club, and that's when I started to advance pretty fast. I had a very good teacher, I was lucky. He taught me an awful lot of things, I don't know if it

was possible to get a better teacher. We worked for several years. I was giving him about a dollar a lesson, coming along about once a week *(laughs)*. 'I started playing adult chess players right away, even though I was competing in junior championship events.'

Did you at any time, when you were young, ever look ahead and say one day I will be world champion?
'Not at the beginning, no. That sounds like an impossible dream just like when a kid says about baseball, that he's going to be a star of the 80s or something like that. But that was part of it.'

Did the chess side of you have any big effect on what you were like at school?
'A little bit, I was sort of concentrating on the chess a lot.'

Did that get you into trouble when you were small?
'Not too much, no.'

You must have had very understanding teachers.
'Yeah, well, it was a private school, so it wasn't too bad.'

But you left quite early, didn't you?
'I left high school when I was sixteen.'

Why did you do that?
'Well, I wanted to play chess all the time. I had all these invitations coming in, to travel around and to make money. So I figured...I didn't particularly like high school anyway. It wasn't that relevant, that much. I felt that I could learn on my own.'

With an IQ of 184 Bobby Fischer was at 15 the youngest ever grandmaster. A year later he was playing as world title contender. Grandmaster Larsen was there:

'Fischer was 16 and at the beginning of the tournament he had a cold so he ordered from the chambermaid some boiling hot water: you put six drops of this into it and then you sit like this for ten minutes... *(Larsen cups his eyes in his hands and inhales)* But Bobby didn't like that, it was a waste of time, and I said to him 'Bobby, you saw that was a good doctor, better do it.' Aaah, it's a waste of time. He didn't like it. It didn't smell good and I don't know what. But better do it, okay. But in order not to waste all this time, this precious time, completely, I should read something now from a book. Okay, which book? Bring me a book. And then he sat there inhaling and I read for him a story from the book, which was called *New Adventures of Tarzan*. It was about Tarzan's first nightmare, when he had eaten some rotten elephant meat, and I read this to the world championship candidate... That has remained in some way a special memory for me: *New Adventures of Tarzan*.'

> 'I think I had a little more vision than some of these people, plus I had the talent. I really liked the game.'

Are most of your friends from the chess world?
'I think just about all of them. I have a few peripheral friends here and there that don't play but I don't see them too much.'

Why do you think that is?
'I don't know. I just don't seem to have too much communication with non-chess players. It's a strange thing.'

It seems to be a game which absolutely demands that you live almost a hermit's life, that you can't afford to have other interests, is that true?
'It's true. I mean if you start partying around, it just doesn't go for a chess player. I like to meet people, but I don't like to meet 80 people at a shot. I like to be with people on an individual level. I like to really meet a person. I don't meet a whole lot of people at one time.'

What is the difference between the people that come up and then go down a side road and stop and don't keep going and somebody like you who keeps going?
'Well, I think first of all I love the game a lot. Also I got good very fast so I already started to feel some of the rewards of being a chess player whereas most players don't get good that fast, even in the Soviet Union. I mean whoever heard of Petrosian when he was 13 or whatever? Probably he was pretty good but, generally speaking, you don't get that good that fast and get the money and acclaim.
'So by the time you have reached top class you have already got sidetracked with other things because there's no money in it, no incentive to keep at it unless you really take a long view that you love it that much that you want to keep at it. But even if you become very good you still have no guarantee of getting anywhere. But I've always personally believed that there was money in chess. People always told me, you know, to get a job *(laughs)* but I never particularly liked that advice and I always thought I would keep at this game. But I can understand why almost all the Western players do drop out.

'If there's a lot of money in chess, the Western players will start to play more chess and then very rapidly we are go-

ing to become better than the Russians are or at least as good as they are, as a whole. For example, you have talented players like Hübner, West Germany. Now somebody like that, in a matter of a few months or maybe a couple of years, if he plays continuously against top opposition, could become as good as one of the Russians, easily, because he already gave Petrosian a tough fight a few months ago – remember that match, played in Spain?

'Anyway, a lot of other players, Mecking, Browne and I'm sure you have some other young players in England, who's the champion? Keene, I think – so if there's a lot of money in chess in the West these players are going to drop whatever else they're doing and concentrate on chess. You can improve very, very rapidly in chess, if you concentrate on it, if you play a lot, that's what really upsets the Russians. A lot of money in chess or reasonable money in chess. I don't imagine it's going to be $100,000 for all these other people but there's definitely going to be more money and more than just enough to make a reasonable living at it.

'Well, I kind of saw it. I think I had a little more vision than some of these people, plus I had the talent. I really liked the game. You know, it's something about my personality being a little more one-sided than other people. They want to be a little more balanced and do other things, I like to concentrate on chess more.'

You have been said to be amongst the most particular, most perfectionist of players in things like light and noise and distraction during a game and yet to the outsider you seem to be someone who concentrates so greatly that that kind of thing doesn't even matter.

'Well, you know, it does matter, if it really gets annoying, for example. I mean I have pretty good powers of concentration but if the guy is coming right up a few feet from me and flashing a flash bulb with his camera and dancing all around me, all kind of things, it's too much. So I needed a certain basic minimum, that's all I asked, really.'

Do people do that?

'Well they used to, before I started complaining about it. Players had no rights. Photographers were coming even inside the hall, shooting pictures, and spectators were mingling around the board. I remember I went to play in West Berlin, it was after I played in East Germany in a team tournament there. I remember there was this guy, he had his head over the board just like this *(Fischer imitates the guy, bowing his head so it is halfway across the side of the chess board beside him.)* All the game he was leaning right over the board. This is the kind of thing I've had to put up with *(laughs)*. I remember another time when I was playing in an Open in the States and a guy whispered a move in my ear. Things like this are not really conducive to high class play *(laughs)*.'

At a world championship tournament in 1967 Fischer argued with officials and walked out while in the lead. Other arguments against chess officialdom followed and it was in 1968, after a fight about spectators and photographers crowding him at the Lugano Chess Olympiad in Switzerland, that Fischer actually walked out of the US team and into retirement.

'I didn't do too much. I was studying a little chess, I was on the west coast of the States moving around in various cities a little bit. For a year and a half, it just so happened there wasn't any event that I wanted to play in during that period of time. I wasn't too satisfied, the prizes were very small, the playing conditions weren't up to what I wanted so I decided I wasn't going to play until I got decent conditions and then when I finally came back there was this one event that I thought was a good deal, it was the Match of the Century over in Belgrade.'

Was there a time during that absence that you reassessed your entire career: the concentration on one thing like chess. Did you ever doubt during that period?

'I thought a little about it but then I decided this was all a waste of time and I had better get back and make some money *(laughs)*.'

The documentary switches to the Olympiad in Siegen, West Germany, in 1970, where Fischer loses to Spassky (his only comment was

After the match against Spassky everything was going to be much easier, Fischer thought, but instead of being an active champion, he disappeared only to return for a second match against the same Spassky in 1992.

'Spassky was lucky, wait till next time'). Next he is depicted as a loner, living in hotel rooms with the television set as his window on the world. Day times for his exercises *(Fischer is shown doing physical exercises as demonstrated by a keep fit instructor on the television)*, night times for old movies. It is almost the only company he keeps. A lot of the time he won't even answer his telephone. He's shy, suspicious of strangers. Burke reveals that it took them nearly six months to persuade him to sit for this television

Day times for his exercises, night times for old movies. It is almost the only company he keeps.

portrait. To Burke's delight Fischer is ready to spend his 29th birthday on March 9, 1972, with him and his crew. He mentions Fischer's gargantuan appetite, but when a birthday cake is brought to the table he looks at it apprehensively and says: 'I don't go for that kind of food.' When it is suggested to have the cake taken away, Fischer replies 'Please'.

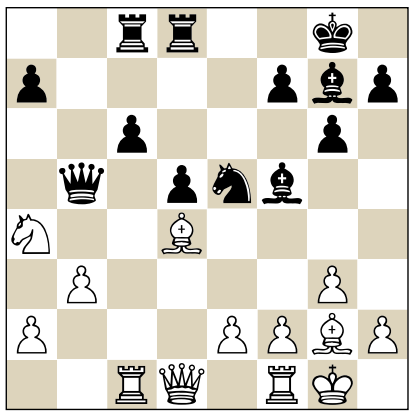
Fischer's constant companion is a red book containing a collection of 350 games played by Spassky. He is shown playing through a Spassky game from the book, banging the pieces down. He has a captured piece in his left hand and is constantly tapping it on the table while he is thinking.

Fischer's loneliness is stressed by the fact that he always trains on his own, without any assistants or seconds. This leads to a further highlight when he shows the viewers a game that has attracted his attention and plays through it giving his comments.

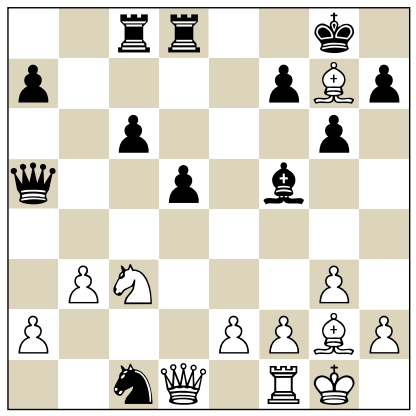
'This is a game between Savon, who is the current Russian chess champion, and his opponent, a kid from Australia, well, he's 21 or so, called Walter Browne.'

Vladimir Savon
Walter Browne
Wijk aan Zee 1972

1.♘f3
'White comes out with the knight and Browne plays a kind of a Sicilian answer to it.'
1...c5 2.g3 g6 3.♗g2 ♗g7 4.0-0 ♘c6
'Browne plays pretty much my variations. He grew up in New York.'
So you would play this way? 'I try to play the board. I find the best move and leave my opponent's personality, his style out of it. If you are going to play your opponent then you're going to have to be playing the subjectively best move rather than the objectively best move. In other words, you are playing what you think might be a good move against his particular predilections of style, whereas the objectively best move is one that will stand up in analysis a hundred years from now.'
5.c3 d5 6.d4 cxd4 7.cxd4 ♘f6 8.♘e5 0-0 9.♘c3 ♗f5 10.♘xc6 bxc6 11.♘a4 ♘d7 12.♗f4 ♕a5 13.♗d2 ♕b5 14.♗c3 ♖ac8 15. ♖c1 ♖fd8 16.b3 e5 17.dxe5 ♘xe5 18.♗d4



'And this was the critical point in the whole game. White felt he was really getting an advantage because if he can stick a knight here *(Fischer puts the knight on the c5-square)* Black's going to be practically in zugzwang, he's not going to have any more levers, his only real good advances are going to be blocked up. And now Black surprised him with this move:'
18...♘d3
'If he takes it off, he takes the bishop and Black has two bishops and is attacking this pawn. It's a dead lost game. He took off this bishop, Black took the rook. No, not right away, here first...'
19.♘c3
'...attacking the queen, queen had to move, now he took the bishop, now took the rook...'
19...♕a5 20.♗xg7 ♘xc1



'Now Black is ahead in material because the rook is worth about five points, the bishop that Black lost here was worth three points, so he'll have two points advantage. It's all theoretical but he's ahead in material now. Now White blundered here, he should move his bishop away *(Fischer moves the bishop to f6)*. I was just talking to Browne on the phone as a matter of fact and he said it was the right move.'
21.♕d4
'But he played this, instead. It looks a good move, superficially, because he covers his bishop, he attacks the knight, and also threatens something like this *(Fischer plays the bishop to h6)* and he's going to give him a checkmate here *(Fischer points to the g7-square)* because the whole kingside position is weakened.'

21...♕xc3
'But he just took the knight off and here White resigned because if he takes back he is checked, *(...♘xe2+)* king moves, he takes the queen, takes back and now White is going to be the exchange and a pawn behind, in other words have a rook for a bishop plus a pawn more which is passed.'
What does a game like that, someone else's game, give you when you're practising?
'It just demonstrates what I kind of believe, that if you play aggressive chess, as Black did here, you can take a strong player pretty easily. White was the Russian champion, which was supposedly a very, very big deal but he got taken apart by somebody who is not supposedly as good as he is.'

The final part of the interview focuses on what may happen if he wins the world title and what the future will bring.

'After I win the title it's going to be a lot easier for me. I'm going to do as I please. I can ease up a little, it's a dangerous way to think, but I'll ease up a little bit. I'm going to be studying chess just as much but it's going to be easier in my life, that's what I mean. I'll be working at chess just as much but I'll do it the way I want to do it and I won't have so much of a hassle with day to day things.'

The story of your chess life so far seems to be the story of a sort of fight. When you win the fight don't you think it's going to be a bit of an anti-climax?
'No, I don't think so, no. You mean, afterwards? Well that's going to be a bit of a problem...but I'll worry about that when I get there.'
Is there anyone else in sight that you think will come along and who could topple you afterwards?
'Possibly, eventually, I think there are a lot of talented players in the West. But I think if you keep yourself in good shape physically, and if you keep your love of the game, keep studying, then you should be a top player till you're in your sixties.'

Don't you ever worry that that concentration on just one side of your personality might prove to have been a mistake?
'Well, yeah, I try to broaden myself. I read quite a bit. But it is a problem because you're kind of out of touch with the real life as a chess player, not having to go to work and deal with people at that level. I've thought of giving it up, off and on, but I always said, what else can I do? *(laughing)* Nothing, right?'

Boris Spassky was the strongest opponent he had faced. 'The best, definitely. He gave me a real fight. All the other players I played, they crumbled.'

With this the documentary ends. But as a postscript we add a few more comments by Fischer from other short interviews, conducted after the end of the match.

Bobby Fischer, how are you feeling now?
'Very good, very happy, the whole thing's finished.'

How do you rate Spassky now, I mean what are the chances in a return match with Spassky?
'Oh, I think I'd beat him much more easily. There's no question about it in my mind.'

This is really because you've broken him, this is what you've really set out to do, isn't it?
'Yeah, yeah *(laughs)*.'

How would you rate him compared to other players you've played against.
'The best, definitely. He gave me a real fight. All the other players I played, they crumbled.'
You see the Russians as using chess for purely propaganda...
'Oh yeah, for the past 20 years it was one of their big things. Military might plus intellectual might. Now the intellectual bit is... *(laughs)*'

'The Russians are the ones that started all this and they are the ones who have been using chess as a propaganda weapon and using every trick to keep the title. Now that's finally turned against them, and probably they wished they hadn't even started to play chess because... *(laughs)*. The years of propaganda have been offset just by this one thing.'

And a few final comments from Gudmundur Thorarinsson, the president of the Icelandic Chess Federation in 1972 and the organizer of the match. It comes from a more recent BBC documentary on the Fischer-Spassky match, which formed part of its *Clash of the Titans* series:

'I have the feeling that they were both heavily damaged, psychologically, after the event... the pressure and everything. But I also had the feeling that they were friends, it didn't affect their relationship. I was very glad...'

'...Fischer was looking out of the window of the Loftleidir Hotel and, maybe at a rather weak moment, said "The only thing I can do is to play chess..." And he seemed rather sad. But then there came a smile on his face and he said "...but I do that rather well."

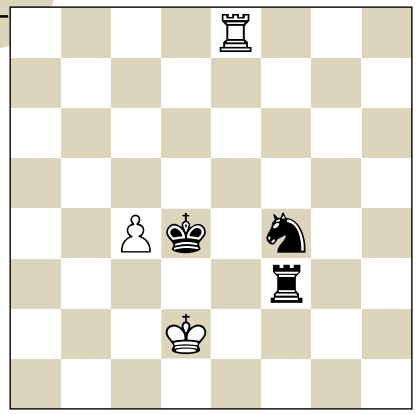
'When Fischer left, he told me "I will be a worthy champion, I will play a lot. I will not be as the Russians. I will take part in all the tournaments. I will be defending the title." ' ■

Charles Hertan

Forcing Moves

Solutions of page 77

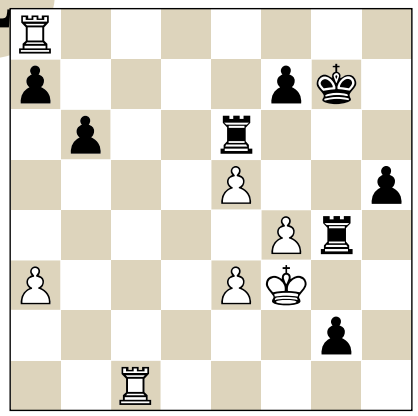
1



Zukertort-Blackburne
Paris 1878

His own sheltering c-pawn was White's undoing after **1...♖f2+ 2.♔d1** 2.♔c1 ♔c3 3.♔b1 ♘d3 (threatening ...♖f1+, ...♘b4+) 4.♖e3 ♖d2! and 5...♔b3. **2...♔c3 0-1** The quietus is 3.c5 ♘d3 (idea ...♖d2 mate) 4.♖e2 ♖f1+.

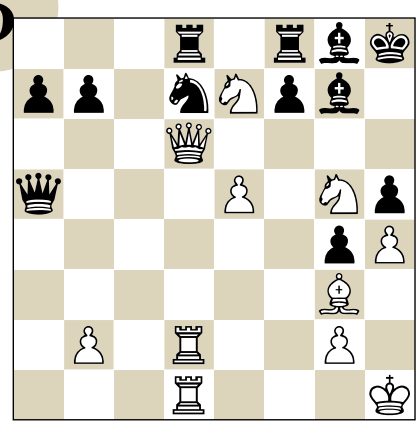
2



Gunsberg-Winawer
Nuremberg 1883

Defense with 1.♖g1? ♖eg6 2.f5 ♖6g5 3.f6+ ♔g6 is folly, so White found **1.♖cc8!** threatening mate in 4! Disoriented, Black imploded with **1...♖g3+ 2.♔e4 ♖xe3+?? 3.♔f5! ♖6xe5+ 4.fxe5 ♖f3+ 5.♔e4** The double-rook mate is intact. **5...♖e3+ 6.♔f4 1-0** Also lost is 1...g1♘+? 2.♔e4 f6 3.♖xa7+ ♔g6 4.♖g8+ ♔h6 5.♖h8+ ♔g6 6.♔d5! fxe5 7.♔xe6. My human instinct 1...f6!? seems to hold: the main line is 2.♖xa7+ ♔g6 3.♖g8+ ♔h6 4.♖xg4 hxg4+ 5.♔xg2 fxe5 6.♔g3 exf4+ 7.exf4 ♔h5=. Rybka prefers fireworks: 1...♖e8!! (vacating e6 for the black king!) 2.♖xe8 g1♕ 3.♖g8+ ♔h7 4.♖h8+ ♔g6 5.♖ag8+ ♔f5 6.♖xh5+ ♔e6 7.♖xg4 ♕d1+ 8.♔g3 ♕e1+ 9.♔f3=. For an encore, the 'mechanical Morphy' justifies even Winawer's 1...♖g3+: 2.♔e4 f5+!! 3.♔xf5 ♖xe5+! 4.fxe5 ♖g5+ 5.♔xg5 g1♕+ 6.♔xh5 ♕g6+ 7.♔h4 ♕e4+ with perpetual.

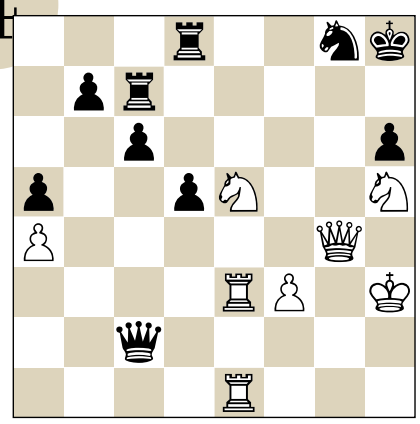
3



Kasparov-Ljubojevic
Brussels SWIFT WC Blitz 1987

Against the greatest player ever, how many super-GM's had to simply stop the clock after one tactical bombshell? **1.♕g6!** But in blitz Ljubo had no time to resign! **1...♗xe5 2.♕h6+ 1-0**

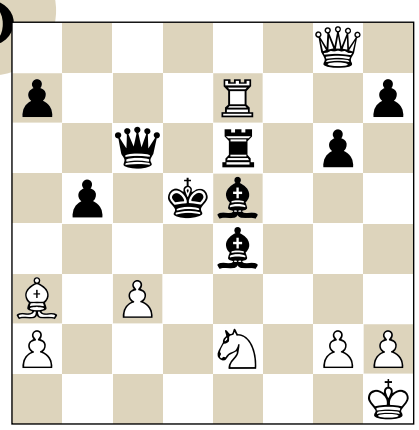
4



Cubas-Efimov
Khanty-Mansiysk 2010

White caps a speculative old-time attack with the pretty stock mating combo **1.♘g6+ ♔h7 2.♖e7+! 1-0** It's mate in 3 using interference and clearance motifs: 2...♖xe7 3.♖xe7+ ♘xe7 4.♘f8+! ♖xf8 5.♕g7 mate. Nice, but we can only rate this 'two stars' since it perfectly illustrates a core thesis of my 2008 book *Forcing Chess Moves*: always examine the most forcing line first!

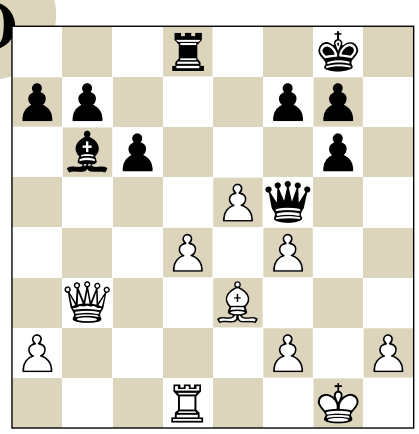
5



Bonin-Glinert
New York 2001

White unleashed the delightful checking wheel **1.c4+! bxc4 2.♕d8+ ♖d6** 2...♗d6 3.♖xe6 ♔xe6 4.♘d4+. **3.♕a5+ 1-0**

6



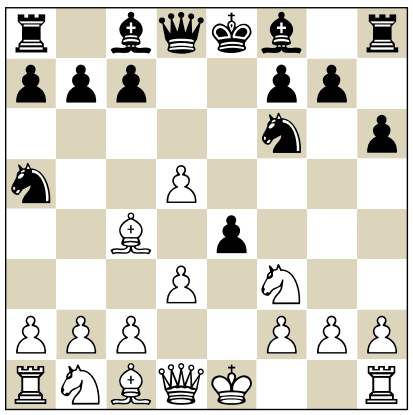
Fleissig-Bird
Vienna 1873

Any Soviet-school graduate would appreciate the dynamic dismantling of White's position: **1...c5** 1...♕g4+ first is okay. **2.d5** 2.♕a4 cxd4 3.♗xd4? ♕xf4. **2...c4! 3.♕a4** The queen must guard d1. **3...♕g4+ 4.♔f1 ♗xe3 5.fxe3 ♕f3+ 6.♔g1 ♕xe3+ 7.♔h1 ♕f3+ 8.♔g1 b5 9.♕c2 ♖xd5 0-1**

Jan Timman

The knight sacrifice on d4

During the 1956 Moscow Olympiad, David Bronstein hit on a splendid idea. Against the Norwegian Rojahn he followed up the starting moves 1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗c4 ♘f6 4.♘g5 d5 5.exd5 ♘a5 6.d3 h6 7.♘f3 e4



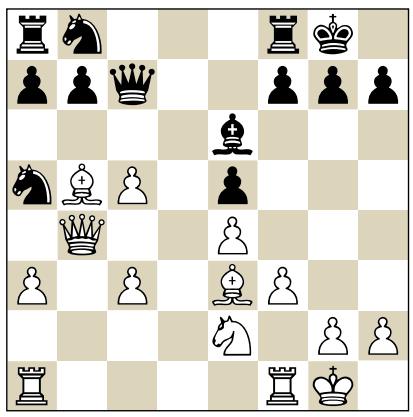
with the stunning 8.dxe4. Bronstein went on to win the game fairly comfortably, mainly because he was by far the stronger player. He never repeated the experiment. The score made with this move later is remarkable: only four points from 17 games for White. There wasn't a single grandmaster amongst Bronstein's followers. He did have a namesake, though, who wanted to honour the great Russian by playing it, but it went wrong again. The Argentinian Luis Bronstein lost in 40 moves against R.Garcia in the Zonal tournament in Mar del Plata in 1969.

The Cochrane Gambit (1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘f6 3.♘xe5 d6 4.♘xf7) is in far better health. More than 500 games have been played with it, with a just about positive score for White. Here, too, the

Piece sacrifices in the opening to create a mighty pawn duo in the centre

small number of draws – about 12 per cent – is remarkable. If White plays the Cochrane Gambit, the Petroff is not exactly a drawing weapon. It is not strange that the Cochrane sacrifice does so much better than Bronstein's, as it blasts a hole in the black king's defences.

Piece sacrifices in the opening to create a mighty pawn duo in the centre is a highly topical theme again after Anand's victory over Wang Hao in Wijk aan Zee. Anand's comments elsewhere in this issue make clear how strong the sac was in that specific position:



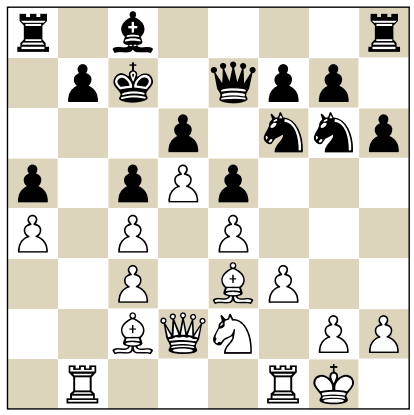
Anand-Wang Hao
position after 15... ♗e6

And here the game continued 16.♘d4 exd4 (see page 23).

There was much speculation in Wijk aan Zee about the genesis of this novelty. It was supposed to have been discovered by Kasimdzhanov and to have been part of Anand's preparation during his match against Kramnik. In his notes Anand acknowledges that the move was found before the match in Bonn without saying whose idea it was and calls the move 16.♘d4 a 'trick'. This is probably the correct name for it. But Wang Hao could have been more alert. The knight sac on d4 already was a regular visitor in the Nimzo-Indian.

Moskalenko devoted an article to it in Yearbook 85 under the heading 'A Trojan Horse in the Nimzo War'. This metaphor annoys me. If you insist on comparing a knight sacrifice to the wooden horse of the Greeks, it should, in order to be true to Homer, at least meet the condition that the sacrifice be fatal if your opponent accepts it, and that he keeps a good position if he refuses. Virtually none of the practical examples he gives complies with these conditions.

That doesn't make the knight sacrifices any less interesting, however. Moskalenko first gives the sacrifices in the closed positions arising from the Sämisch and the Hübner Variation. He mentions Rodriguez-Mellano, Argentina 1989, as the stem game.

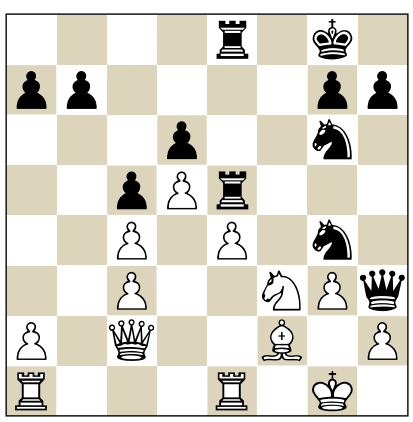


Rodriguez-Mellano
Argentina 1989
position after 15...a5

Black has not played very accurately, which made 16.♘d4!! extremely strong. As a rule you can say that this knight sacrifice is only successful if

Jan Timman

Black's position leaves something to be desired. More than a decade ago, incidentally, a bishop was sacrificed on d4 in the Hübner Variation, but this was a matter of necessity.



Gligoric-Andersson
Niksic 1978
position after 23...♘g4

With his last move Black has sacrificed an exchange. White cannot take the rook for fear of being overrun by the resulting attack. So Gligoric decides to make a counter-sacrifice.

24.♗d4!

Shakhriyar Mamedyarov: splendid idea.

NEW IN CHESS

This surprising bishop sacrifice in principle fails to solve White's problems, but it does manage to change the character of the position.

24...cxd4

Black could also have played the quiet 24...♖e7, but accepting the sacrifice is very tempting.

25.cxd4 ♖h5

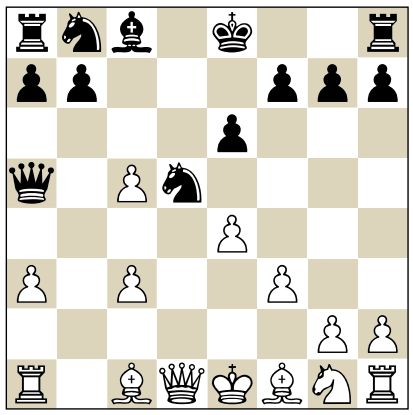
Stronger was 25...♖5e7 in order to maintain the pressure on the e-pawn. But after 26.c5 ♕h5! 27.cxd6 ♖f7 Black would have to see whether he would be able to launch a winning attack.

26.♕g2

The pressure on e4 having eased, White can swap the queens, and in the ensuing endgame White's pawn block represents just enough compensation for the piece. Because of Andersson's continued hesitant play, Gligoric eventually managed to bend the game to his will.

The knight sac ♘e2-d4 is seen most frequently in the 4.f3 line of the Nimzo-Indian.

A basic position arises after White's ninth move.



This position used to arise from the Sämisch Variation, but these days it usually follows from the 4.f3 line. According to the current theory, the Sämisch Variation has a number of drawbacks. To which square should Black withdraw his knight? Against Kramnik and Anand, Wang Hao played 9...♘e7, which is the most common move. 9...♘f6 was also popular for a while. By withdrawing his knight to f6 Black is following a clear strategic plan: he wants to take the knight to d7 in order to attack the c5 pawn. The third retreat, 9...♘c7, is the least common. This move is Smyslov's, who scored an impressive victory over Ageichenko with it in 1967. And this is the variation in which the knight sacrifice ♘e2-d4 was first made.

The game Mamedyarov-Khuzman, Warsaw 2005, went as follows:

9...♘c7 10.♕d4 f6

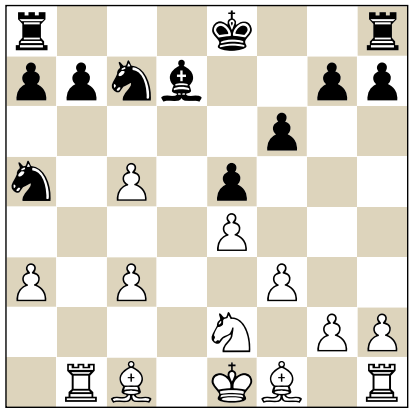
Still following Ageichenko-Smyslov. Black postpones castling, because he wants to castle queenside.

11.♕b4

This is far stronger than Ageichenko's 11.♗c4. White can await the endgame with confidence, as we will see.

11...♘c6 12.♕xa5 ♘xa5 13.♖b1 ♗d7 14.♘e2 e5

Black is ready to castle queenside. Now Mamedyarov launches his splendid idea.



15.♘d4!

In contrast to Anand-Wang Hao, White's knight sac does not involve an attack on the enemy king's bishop, allowing Black to refuse it.

15...0-0-0

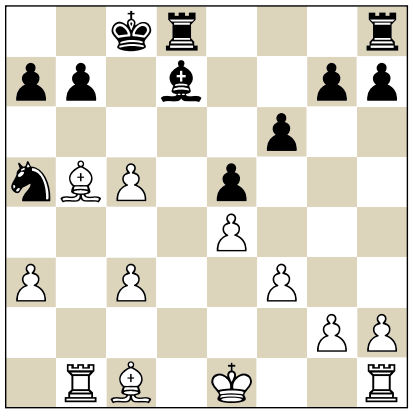
Khuzman continues according to plan. How would the position be after 15...exd4 16.cxd4. A rapid game Khenkin-Rodriguez from 2007 did not supply an answer. Black came to an inglorious end after 16...0-0 17.♗d2 b6 18.♗xa5 bxa5 19.♗c4+ ♔h8 20.♖b7. Black has no reason to think better of his plan to castle queenside. After 16...0-0-0 17.d5 Moskalenko deals with the moves 17...♖he8 and 17...♗a4, concluding that White is

better. The critical move seems to me to be 17...♖de8!, intending to meet 18.♗d2 with 18...f5. Black returns the piece in order to break the white centre. After 19.♗xa5 ♘xd5 20.♗d3 fxe4 21.♗xe4 ♗f5 22.0-0 ♗xe4 23.fxe4 ♖xe4 24.♖f7 ♖e7 he will just survive.

16.♘b5

The point of the knight sac. White forces the swap of at least a couple of minor pieces in order to create pressure along the open b-file.

16...♘xb5 17.♗xb5



17...♔c7

The alternative was to swap on b5 again. In a game Gyimesi-Drasko, Vogasca 2007, Black managed to save the draw, although White was clearly better.

18.♔e2 ♗e6 19.♗e3 ♗c4+ 20.♗xc4 ♘xc4 21.♖b4 ♘xe3 22.♔xe3 ♖d7 23.♖hb1

And Mamedyarov managed to win this double rook ending.

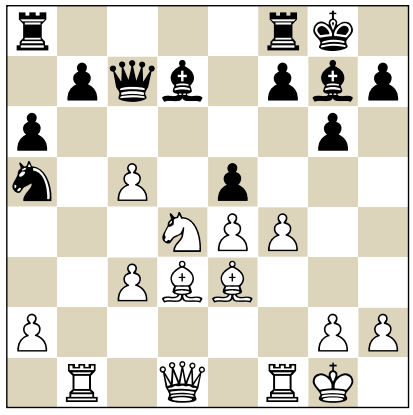
My comments show that Mamedyarov's knight sac was less effective than Anand's. A good illustration of this was the game Milov-Akobian, Morelia 2007, in which White continued 15.♘g3 (instead of 15.♘d4). Wang Hao was unlucky, incidentally, that he seemed to be unfamiliar with the practical examples with 9...♘c7, otherwise he would undoubtedly have been on his guard.

The knight sac ♘e2-d4 also occurs in the Exchange Variation of the Grünfeld Indian.

The terrific game Sakaev-Belov, Krasnoyarsk 2003, went as follows:

GI 5.8 – D86
Konstantin Sakaev
Vladimir Belov
Krasnoyarsk 2003

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.♘c3 d5 4.cxd5 ♘xd5 5.e4 ♘xc3 6.bxc3 ♗g7 7.♗c4 c5 8.♘e2 ♘c6 9.♗e3 0-0 10.0-0 ♗d7 11.♖b1 a6 12.dxc5 ♕c7 13.♘d4 e6 14.f4 ♘a5 15.♗d3 e5



The situation is slightly different from the earlier examples, because the white knight is already on d4. This doesn't make the sacrifice any less effective, though.

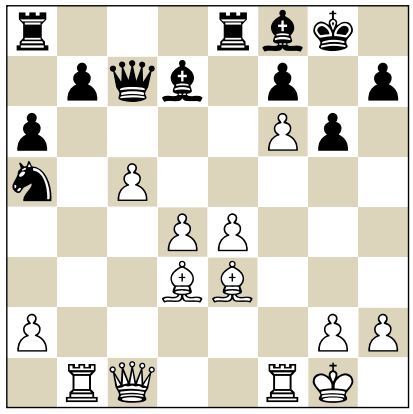
16.f5!

White's main reason for sacrificing the knight here is to get a dangerous initiative on the kingside.

16...exd4 17.cxd4 ♖fe8 18.f6

Forcing the king's bishop to the back rank.

18...♗f8 19.♕c1



Threatening 20.♗h6 and swapping on f8, which would vacate square h6 for the queen.

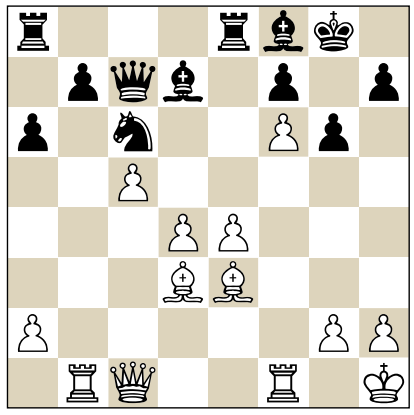
19...♘c6

The best defence. Black deploys his knight.

20.♔h1

A necessary preparatory move. After 20.♗h6? ♘xd4 21.♗xf8 ♖xf8 22.♕h6 ♘e6 the white pawn would be hanging with check, allowing Black to deploy his queen for the defence.

Now White is threatening the devastating 21.♗h6, e.g. 20...♖ad8 21.♗h6 ♘xd4 22.♗xf8 ♖xf8 23.♕h6 ♘e6 24.♖f3, followed by 25.♖h3 and mate.



20...h5?

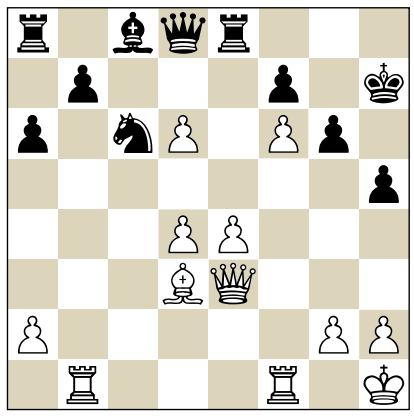
This panic-stricken move is not the solution of Black's problems. The correct defence was the surprising 20...♗g4!, the main aim of this bishop move being to prevent the white king's rook from intervening. After 21.h3 Black can return the piece with good play: 21...♗xh3 22.gxh3 ♕g3.

21.♗f4 ♕d8 22.♗d6!

Now White gains territory.

22...♔h7 23.♕e3 ♗xd6 24.cxd6 ♗c8

Black tries to capture the foremost d-pawn, but this plan is doomed. Slightly better was 24...b5, although this also leaves White with a large advantage.



25.e5!

Jan Timman

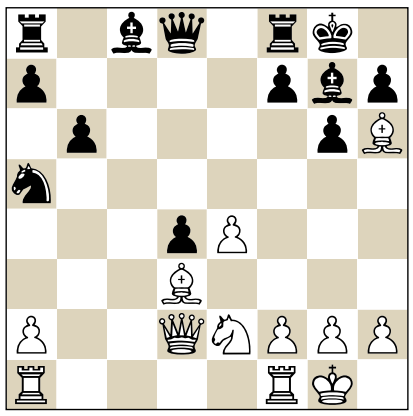
The start of an elegant 'petite combinaison'.
25...♕xd6 26.♗xg6+!
The point of the previous move.
26...fxg6 27.f7 ♕e7 28.fxe8♕ ♕xe8 29.♖f6 ♕e7 30.♖bf1 ♗e6 31.♕e4 ♗f5 32.♖1xf5 gxf5 33.♕xf5+ ♔g8 34.♖g6+
Black resigned.

This game has no great theoretical importance. The big fashion these days is Ivanchuk's method with 10...♘a5 11.♗d3 b6 12.♕d2 e5. After Topalov caught Anand unawares in their first match game in Sofia last year it briefly seemed as if Black would have to look for other ways. But the true-blue Grünfeld-Indian lovers refused to lose heart. In Wijk aan Zee, Vachier-Lagrave twice used Ivanchuk's method, with varying results.

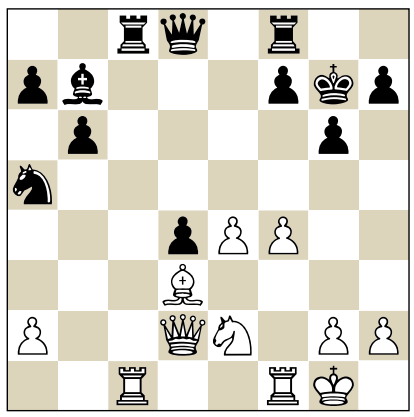
First there was his game against Shirov in Round 4.

GI 5.7 – D86
Alexey Shirov
Maxime Vachier-Lagrave
Wijk aan Zee 2011 (4)

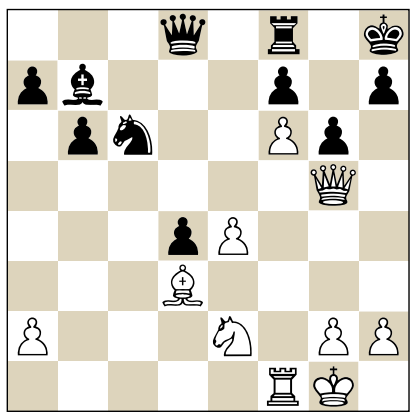
1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.♘c3 d5 4.cxd5 ♘xd5 5.e4 ♘xc3 6.bxc3 ♗g7 7.♗c4 c5 8.♘e2 ♘c6 9.♗e3 0-0 10.0-0 ♘a5 11.♗d3 b6 12.♕d2 e5 13.♗h6 cxd4 14.cxd4 exd4



15.♖ac1
The same position as in Topalov-Anand, with the only difference that White has not yet swapped on g7. This is not really important.
15...♗b7
This bishop development is known from Karjakin-Carlsen, Foros 2008.
16.♗xg7 ♔xg7 17.f4 ♖c8



18.f5
Shirov deviates, but he'll be sorry. Better was 18.♖xc8, since this forces Black to put his queen or bishop on a less favourable square. Carlsen played 18...♕xc8 19.f5 ♘c6, and now White could have created prospects with 20.f6+ (instead of 20.♖f3) 20...♔h8 21.♕g5 ♖g8 22.♖f4!. Vachier-Lagrave may have intended to recapture on c8 with his bishop.
18...♖xc1 19.♕xc1 ♘c6 20.f6+ ♔h8 21.♕g5



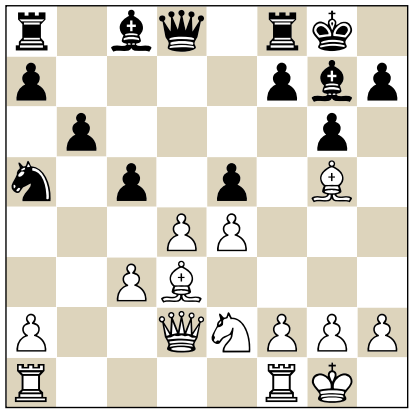
21...♕d6!
This is the difference. Black can avert all threats with his queen.
22.♘g3
A shot in the dark; but after 22.♖f4 of 22.♖f3 Black would still be superior.
22...♖g8 23.♗c4 ♘e5 24.♗b3 d3 25.h3 ♗a6 26.♖f4 d2 27.♔h2 ♕c5 28.h4 ♘d3 29.e5 ♘xf4 30.♘e4 ♘e6 31.♗xe6 ♕c6 32.♗xf7 d1♕
White resigned.

Shortly after Wijk aan Zee, Cheparinov played the variation against Safarli at the Aeroflot Open in Moscow, undoubtedly planning to swap on c8 on move 18. But the young Azeri stole a march on him. Instead of fianchettoing his bishop, he took his knight to b7, on route to c5. After 18 moves the players agreed a draw.

It is possible that Nakamura had also discovered Safarli's plan when he squared off against Vachier-Lagrave in Round 10 of Wijk aan Zee. He deviated earlier, anyway.

GI 5.7 – D86
Hikaru Nakamura
Maxime Vachier-Lagrave
Wijk aan Zee 2011 (10)

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.♘c3 d5 4.cxd5 ♘xd5 5.e4 ♘xc3 6.bxc3 ♗g7 7.♗c4 c5 8.♘e2 ♘c6 9.♗e3 0-0 10.0-0 ♘a5 11.♗d3 b6 12.♕d2 e5 13.♗g5



Gelfand's move.
13...♕d7 14.♗h6
On the day this game was played, I commented on the games in Wijk aan Zee, together with Ivan Sokolov. 'Why is the queen worse on d7 than on d8?' Ivan asked me. I couldn't tell him. I also found it hard to understand Gelfand's and Nakamura's move. In many Grünfeld Indian variations, Black voluntarily develops his queen to d7. It was only when I studied the position at home that I began to understand White's idea. In some cases Black wants to develop his bishop to g4, and now that road is barred. It is also good

for Black to transfer his knight to e5 via c6 after the advance of the white f-pawn to f5. Now White can pin the knight if he wants, and swap it, with ♗d3-b5.

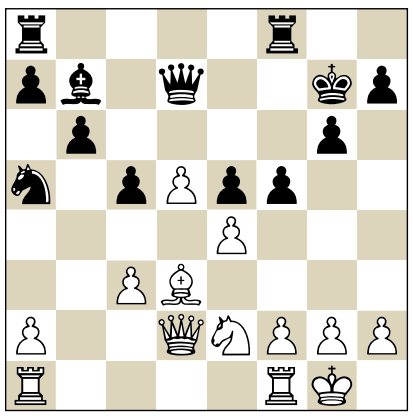
14...♗b7

A logical idea in itself. Black connects his rooks. In Gelfand-Kamsky, Bazna 2009, Black played 14...♗xh6 15.♕xh6 f6, after which White continued to exert pressure on the black position with 16.f4 ♕g7 17.♕h4.

15.♗xg7 ♔xg7 16.d5

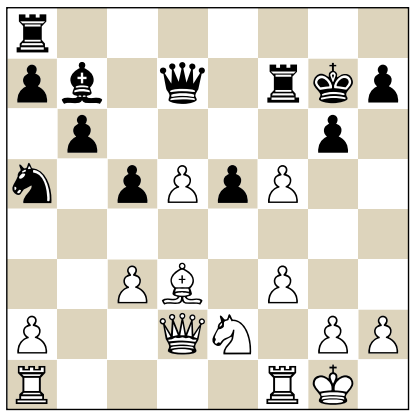
This advance is stronger than 16.f4, as in Leitao-Sutovsky, Bursa World Team Championship 2010. Sutovsky reacted sharply with 16...f5!, and after 17.d5 (what else?) 17...fxe4 18.♗xe4 ♘c4 19.♕d3 ♕a4 20.f5 ♘d6 Black was better.

16...f5



17.f3!

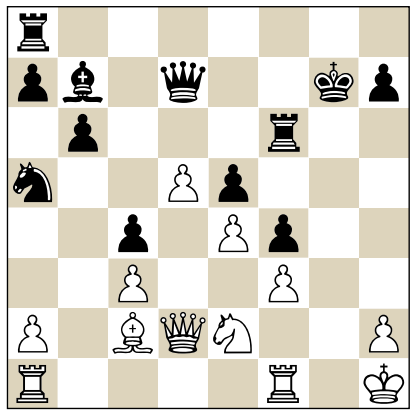
This is what Nakamura had prepared. White lets the black bishop bite on granite, while at the same time threatening to break open the black kingside with 18.exf5. Vachier-Lagrave ignored this threat. He played 17...♖f7, and after 18.exf5



ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

18...c4 19.♗c2 gxf5 20.♖ad1 f4 21.g3 he was swept aside. It was an easy victory for Nakamura, and it gave him a decisive lead in the tournament. Later, Vachier-Lagrave said that he had planned 18...♕xd5 (instead of 18...c4), only to discover too late that White then gets a winning advantage with 19.fxg6 ♖d7 20.♕g5 ♕xd3 21.♕xe5+ ♔g8 22.♕e6+ ♔h8 23.♘f4 ♕d6 24.g7+! ♔xg7 25.♖ad1.

How should Black have played on move 17? 17...f4 is probably his best chance to keep the position as closed as possible. Strategically speaking, 17...c4 18.♗c2 f4 would be the correct way. (Ivanchuk followed the same strategy in the stem game with this system against Peter Heine Nielsen, Amber 2006: 1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.♘c3 d5 4.cxd5 ♘xd5 5.e4 ♘xc3 6.bxc3 ♗g7 7.♗c4 0-0 8.♘e2 c5 9.0-0 ♘c6 10.♗e3 ♘a5 11.♗d3 b6 12.♕d2 e5 13.d5 f5 14.♗g5 ♕d6 15.♗h6 f4 16.♗xg7 ♔xg7 17.f3 c4 18.♗c2 g5 19.♔h1 ♗d7 20.g3 ♖ae8.) Now Black's position is less good, as he will find it hard to deploy his minor pieces. White exploits this by quickly opening the g-file. The game could then continue as follows: 19.g3 g5 20.gxf4 gxf4 21.♔h1 ♖f6.



And now comes the very strong 22.♘d4!. In a roundabout way I have returned to the spectacular knight sacrifice. Black is forced to accept it. After 22...exd4 23.♕xd4 ♕e7 24.e5 ♖h6 25.♖g1+! White will call the shots. ■

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Maxime Vachier-Lagrave

CURRENT ELO: 2728
DATE OF BIRTH: October 21, 1990
PLACE OF BIRTH: Nogent-sur-Marne, France
PLACE OF RESIDENCE: Le Plessis-Trévise, France

What is your favourite colour?
Blue.

What kind of food makes you happy?
Mostly junk, also snails and frogs.

And what drink?
Banana milkshake.

What is the most interesting book you have ever read?
Proofs from THE BOOK by Martin Aigner and Günter M. Ziegler.

What is your all-time favourite movie?
Cloverfield wins by lack of cinematic culture.

What is your favourite TV series?
Big Bang Theory and *Malcolm* – hard to find a tie-breaker here.

Do you have a favourite actor?
Jim Parsons is just PERFECT.

And a favourite actress?
Let's just say that many women chess players could be successfully redeployed on the big screen.

What music do you like to listen to?
There are two kinds: rock and crap. I'd go mainly, though not exclusively, with the first.

Do you have a favourite artist?
Myself, even though teachers wouldn't agree. But even the best artists were misunderstood in their time.

What was your best result ever?
Winning the Essent tournament in Hoogeveen in a fine and smooth manner and reporting about it (New In Chess 2010/8 – ed.) was nice, but I hope there's more to come.

What was the best game you have ever played?
Fontaine-Vachier-Lagrave, French Championship, Aix-les-Bains 2007.

Who is your favourite chess player of all time and why?
Fischer, because, to quote Vlad Tkachiev: 'All pieces play from every corner.' Genius of geometry, so it seems.

Is there a chess book that had a profound influence on you?
The Sorcerer's Apprentice by David Bronstein and Tom Fürstenberg. Even though nowadays it's more like 'The Computer's Apprentice'.

What are chess players particularly good at?
Tennis, and for some, dancing.

Do chess players have typical shortcomings?
A huge tendency for irony. But I think of it as a quality.

What is it that you appreciate most in a person?
Irony and honesty.

What is it that you dislike in a person?
Lack of intelligence.

Who or what would you like to be if you weren't yourself?
Paris Hilton's brain. Definitely would like some peace of mind.

Do you have any superstitions?
Chess is a scientific game. No superstition should even be allowed.

Which three people would you like to invite for dinner?
This is too difficult a question. It should be either two, or so many more than three.

Is there anything you'd love to learn?
How to chat up girls.

What is your greatest fear?
That someone reads my mind and sees all the shameful stuff that is located there.

What would you save from your house if it went on fire?
I would hope I would be awake, so that I can save at least myself.

If you could change one thing in the chess world, what would it be?
No more tournaments exclusively for women.

What will be the nationality of the 2050 chess world champion?
Statistically speaking, the Chinese are the favourites. But maybe some 'living robot', who knows.

Is a knowledge of chess useful in everyday life?
Definitely not.

What is the best thing that was ever said about chess?
'Chess is for crazy people.' Makes sense.

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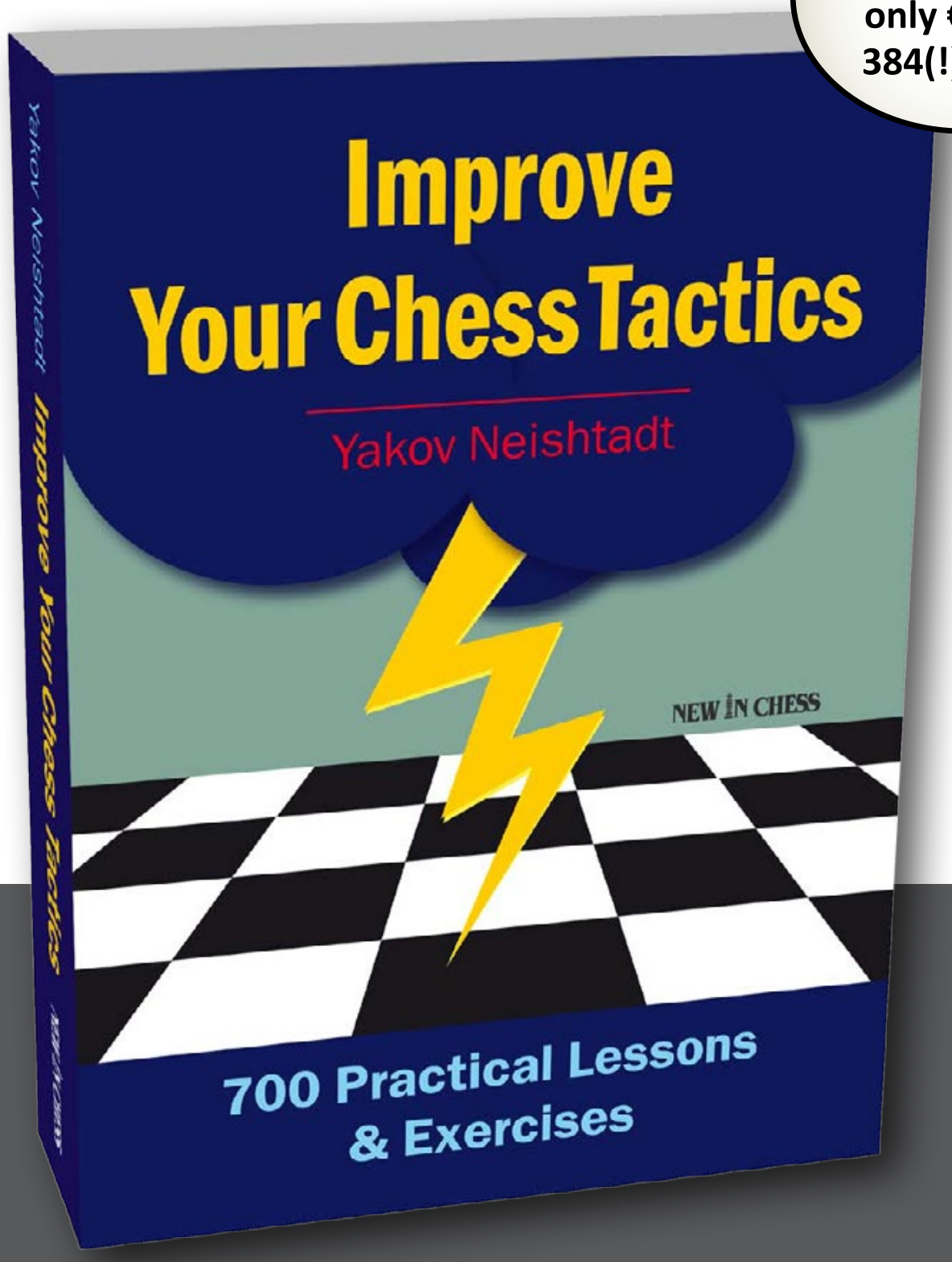

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